

DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY UPDATE

Fall 2002
California Library Literacy Services

Understanding Ageism and Adult Learners

Chris McFadden, San Diego Public & San Diego County Libraries, cnmcfadden@yahoo.com

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. People in their 50s made up 17% of the population in 2000. As the Baby Boomers age, this segment will continue to expand and comprise 21% of the population by 2010.

At READ/San Diego, 21% of our adult learners, or 213 students, are over the age of 50. Those are pretty good numbers, but it probably pales in comparison to the 810 students in the program under the age of 50 who represent our next wave of seniors.

“As with racism and sexism, ageism forces older adults to internalize negative beliefs about themselves.”

More and more, the cost of retirement and health care continues to rise, forcing Americans to work past the current normal age for retirement, and also forcing older adults *back* into the workforce. If this segment of the population is to work, will they be able to keep pace with our increasingly technological and interdependent world economy?

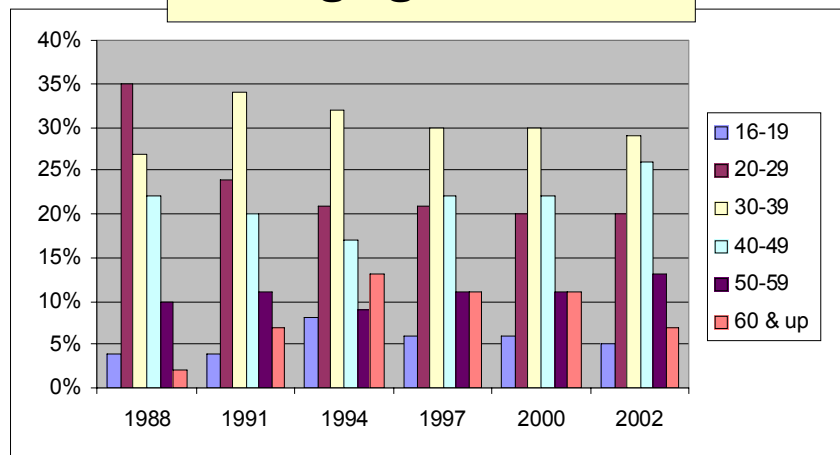
We will be seeing older adult learners in our programs, and we will find ourselves actively courting them.

There are many ageist stereotypes out there that depict older adults as slow learners. We’ve all heard them: “Their ‘memories are gone;’ they are afraid of computers; they are unwilling to change and adapt to ‘the new ways of doing things;’ they are susceptible to physical ailments; and they are less energetic.” As with racism and sexism, ageism forces older adults to internalize negative beliefs about themselves.

In the case of ageism, this happens more often to those who are not well educated. It can lead to low self-esteem, depression, loneliness and unhappiness. Ageism is heightened among those who are already discriminated against when they are members of low-status racial groups, women or immigrants.

Fortunately, the research has shown that ageist stereotypes are false. Older learners perform well. They are just as interested in learning new things and acquiring information as younger adults. As human beings, our quest for knowledge and information does not decrease with age. There may be a loss of visual acuity, hearing and strength,

Our aging students...



Adults receiving instruction in California Library Literacy Services today are about 10 years older on average than the learner population in 1988. Twenty to 29 year-olds have declined from 35% in 1988 to 20% in 2002 and learners ages 50 and up have increased from 12% to 20% during that same period. **Source: California State Library, 2002.**

but these might be offset by an increase in judgment and maturity.

Older adult students tend to have many valuable characteristics. They are happier, satisfied, loyal, motivated, reliable and committed. They have better attendance than younger students, and that should make for very happy tutors!

Reference: "Combating Workplace Ageism," Reio & Sanders-Reio, *Adult Learning, Vol. 11, Number 1.*

A New Approach Required In Order to Attract Retiring 'Boomers' to Literacy

Carla Lehn, California State Library

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(Excerpted from a presentation given at the California Literacy Conference, 2002)



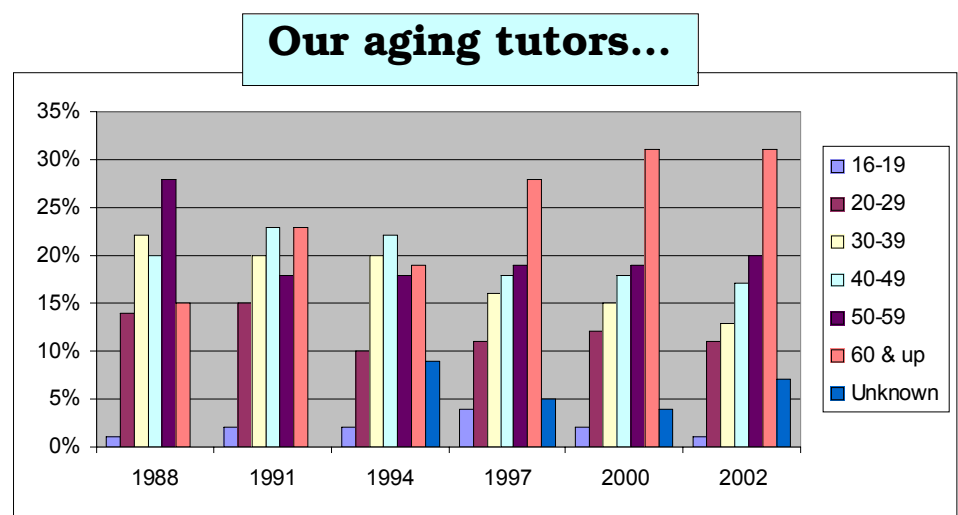
Photo courtesy of Bruggemeyer Memorial (Monterey Park) Library.

One of the issues I've been encouraging people to examine is that the upcoming senior volunteers (baby boomers) may be very different from the senior volunteers we're used to recruiting and managing. A great study on baby boomers as volunteers was done in Australia in 2001 – here are a couple of key thoughts for you:

- Baby boomers do see themselves becoming more involved in volunteering in the future, and have clear ideas about what they expect from their volunteer experiences.
- They want to be consulted with about the volunteer program, and participate in its evaluation, and they want to be truly valued and appreciated in their volunteer roles.
- They want meaningful, interesting, creative and challenging volunteer assignments.
- They want the volunteer experience to meet some of their own personal needs, not just the organization's needs.
- They are unlikely to commit for the long term.

What can your literacy services do to adapt to these changing needs?

- Offer choice, flexibility, and responsiveness to today's lifestyles.
- Develop career paths for volunteers.
- Provide "try-before-you-buy" opportunities -- this generation looks for quality, efficiency and effectiveness. (Episodic volunteering has been the norm for many of them.)
- Provide clear expectations of time, tasks and training.
- Develop a range of volunteering opportunities that are short term, time specific and flexible.



Between 1988 and 1994, there was a relatively balanced distribution of ages in California's tutor corps. In subsequent years, literacy services began to attract more tutors age 60 and older. That category has climbed from 15% in 1988 to nearly a third of our tutors (31%) in 2002. **Source: California State Library, 2002.**

Carla Recommends...

There's also a fairly short article on senior volunteers on the "Independent Sector" website that might be of interest: www.independentsector.org/programs/research/senior_volunteers_in_america.html. For me, the last section "Creating Links and Encouraging Volunteerism" was the most meaningful . . .

“The difference in the rate of volunteer participation is very apparent when one compares those who are asked versus those who are not asked. Seniors were approximately four times more likely to volunteer if they were asked... Among all adults surveyed, including seniors, it was found that minorities— specifically blacks and Hispanics— were not asked to volunteer as frequently as whites were. When asked, minorities were four to five times more likely to volunteer— a rate almost equivalent to whites.” – Independent Sector, 2002

Sites for Adult ESL Learners:

On-line activities & information for adults learning English

Valerie Hardie, San Diego Public & San Diego County Libraries

vrhardie@hotmail.com



About.com's Guide to English as a Second Language

<http://esl.about.com/>

Hosted by an English teacher in Tuscany, the site includes quizzes, vocabulary study pages, interactive polls, chat rooms, pen pal information, and a weekly e-mail newsletter. It also has pages of resources for Spanish speakers learning English and for teachers of English. Recommended for intermediate to advanced English language learners.

Dave's ESL Cafe

<http://www.eslcafe.com>

Has many resources for ESL learners. In addition to chat rooms, discussion forums, and message boards, there are pages devoted to idioms, phrasal verbs, and grammar and other hints for the day, English language programs worldwide, and quizzes on a variety of topics.

English Listening Lounge

<http://www.englishListening.com>

Thirty recordings of ordinary English speakers, accompanied by questions, are available at no charge. For a monthly fee, learners can register and have access to many more files and an e-mail discussion feature. RealAudio Player® (a free download) is needed to use this site. Although the pages do not have graphics of speakers or topics, they do provide a good opportunity to hear short recorded passages.

eViews

<http://www.eviews.net>

Provides recordings of 10-11 minute interviews with native English speakers (U.S., British, Irish, etc). Learners subscribe free of charge and can download interviews, transcripts, and comprehension questions and answers. (Uses RealAudio® and MP3 formats; recommended for intermediate and above learners.)

Frizzy University Network

<http://thecity.sfsu.edu/~funweb/>

A collection of links for ESL learners interested in using World Wide Web resources to improve their writing skills. Improving grammar, finding online reference materials, creating web pages, and connecting with others via e-mail are a few of the link categories.

Grammar Self Study Quizzes for ESL Students

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/grammar.html>

Numerous grammar quizzes for learners to complete and check on their own. Learners can choose from a variety of grammar points to practice (articles, prepositions, sentence structures, etc.) and question formats (cloze, dialogues, fill-in-the-blank sentences) at three degrees of difficulty (easy, medium, difficult). The same host site offers additional quizzes and activities dealing with vocabulary building, phrasal verbs, slang, idioms, homonyms, crosswords, and anagrams at <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/s/> and <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~itesls/>, as well as links to other sites with activities for learners (<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/ESL.html>).

Interesting Things for ESL Students

<http://www.ManyThings.org>

Interesting Things for ESL Students is a fun study site for students of English as a Second Language. Description: Includes quizzes, games, and puzzles to help students learning English.

Linguistic Funland TESL Activities for Students

<http://www.linguistic-funland.com/teslact.html>

A collection of links to activities that learners can access online, including word games, grammar exercises, writing activities, and idioms. (Many links may also be of interest to teachers looking for ideas.)

OWL Online Writing Lab

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/>

Different materials for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and teachers, which include [resource pages](#), [handouts](#), and [exercises](#). You can also get printer-friendly and Adobe PDF versions of these handouts and exercises.

PEAKEnglish

<http://www.peakenglish.com>

An online interactive English school. It offers limited free membership which includes a placement test and English language profile, as well as access to online lessons, exercises, and games. A more extensive program is available for a fee. Teachers will also find TeacherFeatures, set of tools which enable them to communicate with and manage the experience of students while they study online.

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab

<http://www.esl-lab.com/>

This site is a vast collection of listening exercises and activities, including conversations and quizzes. The exercises target high-beginning to low-advanced learners. (Real Audio is required to use this site--links for free downloads are provided.)

U.S. Citizenship Study Pages

<http://www.uscitizenship.org>

This site offers a web-based course to help immigrants prepare themselves to take the U.S. citizenship test. The course is free for residents of Minnesota and available for a small charge to all others.

Wordsmyth

<http://www.wordsmyth.net/>

Wordsmyth is an online American English dictionary with an integrated thesaurus. Users can type in a word (or in some cases, such as guide dog, a two-word term) and receive a definition, pronunciation key, related words, synonyms, cross-reference links to synonyms, usage examples, and derivatives of the word. (This site will be most helpful to intermediate and above learners.)

California Library Literacy Services Are Inclusive of English as a Second Language...

While California Library Services Act funds cannot be used to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, we recognize the importance of providing this service. We applaud local library literacy services that have identified other resources to provide ESL services in communities where there is a need.

-- California State Library Values, 2002

Reminder: English As A Second Language Statistics Wanted for State Library Publication!

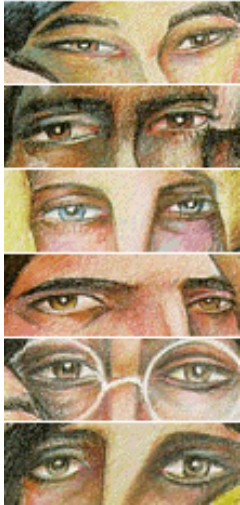
The State Library has received requests to collect and publish ESL statistics annually with other literacy statistics, thus providing recognition for these valuable services. For these reasons, we are requesting that you provide the following information so we can include it in the *California Library Statistics* annual publication. If you haven't already done so, please e-mail this as soon as possible to Mickie Potter at mpotter@library.ca.gov.

Please provide: Name of Library ♦ Number of adult ESL students served in 2001/02 (who were not reported on your CLLS adult literacy report to the state) ♦ Number of adult learners served whose first language is: Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Hmong, Korean, Japanese, Russian /Slavic, Vietnamese, Other (please list).

Thank you,
Carole Talan, California State Library

Racism and Literacy in the U.S.

Lynne Price, San Francisco Public Library
Diversity Committee Chair
lynnep@sfpl.org



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DIVERSITY BULLETIN BOARD

Something for Everyone...



Dear Dimensions of Diversity,

I love the electronic version of the newsletter - usually I tend to read e-mail more closely than the hardcopy versions, which I put off till I can find a large chunk of time (which doesn't happen often!) I was moved by Joan's article on her experiences in Kenya.

I would love to see an article on what impact diverse cultures have on the learning styles/ attitudes/perspectives of learners? Our tutors sometimes learn little nuggets of information (such as learners from certain cultures consider it impolite to have eye-contact with a "teacher") from sheer experience. Even though we need to avoid stereotyping, it may be useful to have a "diversity" checklist or some listing of multi-cultural resources, so tutors can go in with some knowledge of specific cultural habits. Of course, with diversity among tutors too, it may help if learners and program staff could be better clued-in to dealing with volunteers from different cultures.

**Thanks,
Shanti Bhaskaran
Read Santa Clara**

**"In true community there will be enough diversity and conflict to shake loose our need to make the world in our own image. In fact, we must define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with lives."
- Parker Palmer**

Diversity Committee Members:

- Lynne Price (Chair) – San Francisco Public Library
- Tracy Block – San Diego Public & San Diego County Libraries
- Sharon Clements – Riverside Public Library
- Terri Cook – Santa Barbara Public Library
- Cora Forcell – Altadena Public Library
- Valerie Hardie – San Diego Public & San Diego County Libraries
- Chris McFadden – San Diego Public & San Diego County Libraries
- Valerie Reinke – California State Library
- Joan Sykes-Miessi – San Mateo County Library

It's Your Turn!

How would you respond to Shanti's letter?

- Do you have some insight into how diverse cultures impact a tutoring session?
- Do you have a tip for interacting with people from various cultures?
- How do you train your tutors, learners and staff to be sensitive to issues of cultural/ethnic difference?

E-mail the editor with your response: vreinke@library.ca.gov

A Word or Two From the Editor:



Hope you enjoy our second on-line version of the *Dimensions of Diversity* newsletter! For now, it's coming at you in Microsoft Word, but we are exploring other alternatives. One nice thing about Word is that you can take portions of this newsletter (Valerie Hardie's great ESL website list or Lynne Price's comprehensive bibliography, for instance) and make them into handouts for your own purposes. Always be sure to credit the authors of course, but use what you see here to your heart's content!

We are also looking to get these newsletters archived on the web as a link to the California Library Literacy Services home page – you will be the first to know when it happens.

The Diversity Committee welcomes your feedback and your contributions to this quarterly publication. Please contact me at vreinke@library.ca.gov with comments and suggestions.

-- Valerie Reinke, California State Library

Diversity Calendar 2002-2003

December

- 6 - St. Nicholas Day (International)
- 7 - Pearl Harbor Day (United States)
- 12 - Virgin of Guadalupe (Mexico)
- 16 - Eid-Al-Fitr (Islamic, Muslim)
- 16-24 - [Las Posadas](#) (Mexico)
- 22 - [Winter Solstice](#) (International)
- 25 - [Christmas](#) (Christian, Roman Catholic, International)
- 26 - Boxing Day (Canada, United Kingdom)
- 26-Jan 1 - [Kwanzaa](#) (African-American)
- 31 - [New Year's Eve](#) (United States, International)

January

- 1 - Emancipation Day (African-American, United States)
- 1 - Feast of St. Basil (Christian, Orthodox)
- 1 - Japanese New Year (Japan)
- 1 - [New Year's Day](#) (United States)
- 5 - Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday (Sikh)
- 6 - [Epiphany](#) (Christian)
- 6 - [The Nativity of Jesus Christ](#) (Christian, Orthodox)
- 6 - Three Kings' Day (Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic)
- 13 - Lohri (Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh)
- 18 - Tu b'Shvat or Tu B'Shevat (Jewish, Israel)
- 19 - [World Religion Day](#) (Baha'i)
- 20 - [Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday - Observed](#) (United States)

February

[Black History Month](#) (United States)

1 - [Chinese Lunar New Year](#) (China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam)

1-3 - [Tet Nguyen Dan](#) (Vietnam)

2 - Candlemas

2 - [Groundhog Day](#) (United States)

2 - [Imbolc](#) (Wiccan)

5 - Anniversary of the Constitution (Mexico)

11 - [Eid al-adha](#) (Islamic, Muslim)

12 - [Abraham Lincoln's Birthday](#) (United States)

14 - [Valentine's Day](#) (United States)

15 - Lantern Festival (Taiwan)

17 - [President's Day](#) (United States)

22 - [George Washington's Birthday](#) (United States)

24 - Flag Day (Mexico)

Calendar items from:

<http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/>