

**Senior spaces and the Old Bridge Public Library  
LIBRARIES, OLDER ADULTS AND SENIOR SPACES**

**June 8, 2007  
10 am-12 N  
Old Bridge Public Library  
Old Bridge, NJ**

Today is a day for celebration and congratulations at the Old Bridge Public Library (OLPL) as we witness the birth of an innovation, “Senior Spaces,” long awaited by advocates interested in better serving Older Adults. It’s fitting that we know who is responsible for this Senior Space and that we take this opportunity to say well done.

**1.) Celebration and Congratulations**

Let’s congratulate Assistant Library Director, Allan Kleiman who also directs Senior Spaces, for his fearless commitment to take library services for older adults into a world they have never entered before.

It was more than 20 years ago that I began my personal crusade for more attention, funding, programs and education for elder library services. With me in the trenches, beginning in the 80s and often leading the group, was Allan Kleiman, then at the Brooklyn Public Library where he headed the most comprehensive program of services for elders emanating from any library in the United States. Over the many years that I have known him, Allan’s interest in the Older Adult population has never waned. It was that steadfast dedication for which he won the American Library Association Margaret Monroe Award in 2006.

But we know that without the equal commitment of the Library Director, Margery Cyr, Allan could have maintained this dedication without fulfillment here in Old Bridge. It takes pioneering spirit coupled with a daunting passion to make what we do professionally have even more meaning in the lives of the people we are chartered to serve. Marjery and Allan have that spirit.

Then, too, without the support of the Board of Trustees we are certain that this initiative would never have gotten off the ground. Finally, as we say our congratulations we want to pay tribute to the vision of Cheryl O'Connor, Executive Director of INFOLINK, the regional group to which the OBPL belongs. Cheryl is another one of NJ's Library leaders who is unafraid to chart new directions for service. Let's say well done to all of them.

### **Presentation Objectives**

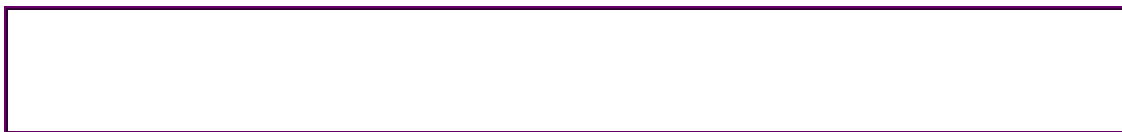
I have three objectives for my presentation this morning. I'd like to leave you with :

- 1.) the specifics of the shifting ballasts of the American population across the nation, in New Jersey, and in INFOLINK -- the why of Senior Spaces
- 2.) a few of the details about what Senior Spaces promise to bring to the world of OA services, not just in New Jersey but across the country—the what of Senior Spaces, which Allan will share more about with you.

And, finally, as most of you know who have heard me speak before, I never leave an audience without giving them a challenge. So I'll conclude with:

- 3.) challenges you can accept for the future—developing new and needed OA services that your library can introduce

### **The Shifting Ballasts of the our Nation's Population**



As we meet this morning, the graying of America is more than just a catchy phrase. The first reality we face as we plan library and information services relevant to the people we are chartered to serve is the changing face of our nation. America is indeed growing old, but that aging is occurring in an unfamiliar landscape. From the beginning of the last

century, when average life expectancy was 47 years, until the seventh year in the new century, the percentage of older Americans has more than tripled.

The population of elders in the U.S. approximates 35 million, about 12% of the total population. The baby boomers, born between the late 1940's and the early 1960's, have arrived on the scene. With the aging of the boomers this number is predicted to nearly double by 2030. On July 2, 2006, the majority of boomers were 50 years of age and older for the first time in history; 78,000,000 million are preparing for retirement. The first wave will become eligible for early retirement under Social Security in 2008 and for Medicare in 2011. That the boomers are twice as large a cohort as those currently over 65 will necessarily impact the collections, programs and services emanating from our libraries over the next decade and beyond.

But let's bring it closer to home. The population here, in New Jersey is projected to grow as substantially with the aging of the baby-boom generation. In 2000 there were 1,443,800 New Jerseyans aged 60 and over. By 2025 it is projected that the population will number over 2.5 million. While the national average is 13.5%, more than 17.2% of New Jersey's population is over 60; it is expected to grow to 23.6% by 2025.

And closest to home of all is the changing population that Cheryl O'Connor and INFOLINK with its 900 multitype members serve. In 2003 more than half of the New Jersey population 60 years of age and older resided in seven counties: Bergen, Ocean, Essex, Middlesex, Monmouth, Hudson and Union. Four of these counties comprise the INFOLINK, Regional Cooperativ: Essex, Hudson, Union and Middlesex.

It is INFOLINK that has contracted with the Old Bridge Public Library for the model Senior Spaces incubator project, that focuses on a major diversity issue, the aging of the American population.

The second reality we face as we plan library and information services for the future is the changing face of the aging themselves . The older adult population is more diverse

racially and ethnically than at any time in the past due in part to immigration and in part to increased life expectancy. In 1999, minority groups, which I prefer to refer to as emerging majorities, represented about 16% of the population of people over 65; by 2030 that percentage is expected to double the combined aging of the current Hispanic, Asian-American and African-American populations—pointing up the importance of achieving greater cultural competency and sensitivity in the delivery of all library services and in the recruitment and retention of a more diverse professional workforce.

In New Jersey about 60% of the minority population 60 years and older in 2003 resided in four counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Union; the latter three are in INFOLINK territory. In addition, Middlesex has 8.5%, the largest percentage, of Asian and Pacific islanders over the age of 60.

As the demographics of our country are shifting and as minorities become emerging majorities, libraries not only need more ethnic and bilingual collections, the ethnic aging need to know that the library has something of value to offer them.

### Senior Spaces

So how will Senior Spaces respond to this vastly altered demographic landscape? Demonstrating support for the improved LS for OA, Cheryl O'Connor announced that an INFOLINK contract was awarded to this Library (OBPL) to redefine library services for Older Adults—a daunting task, but one this staff believes it's up to taking on.

The hope that came with INFOLINK funding is that Senior Spaces will be replicated throughout INFOLINK and ultimately throughout the nation.

The project budget is \$20,000--\$10,000 from the INFOLINK contract and \$10,000 from the OBPL budget. An additional \$10,000 was received only today from the New Jersey State Library for a total of \$30,000 for the first 18 months of operation. The funding is slated to purchase the services of a Space Design consultant, furniture, signage, computers, programming, a SENIORNET\_license, which will give access to this peer to peer learning

center for training, online classes and a global network of older adults interested in technology. The funding will also support the initiation of programming and publicity. In its request for INFOLINK funding the OBPL pledged its commitment to institutionalize the Senior Spaces project by June 2008 with monies allocated for its support in the library's regular budget.

Although the 2006 WHCOA pointed up that the baby boomers, beginning to plan for retirement, are looking specifically toward libraries to provide lifelong learning, civic engagement, ideas for second careers and meaningful volunteer opportunities—all of which are addressed by what this library's Senior Spaces project, very few libraries in this or any region have specific programs for Older Adults.

While Libraries for the Future (LFF) has advocated for designated spaces that can provide an anchor for services for the Older Adult, they have aimed their efforts completely towards “active, well-educated baby boomers ready to soon retire.”

INFOLINK and Senior Spaces are focusing on demographics that are far different. The Old Bridge Pub Lib is a vastly more inclusive approach in “Your Space: The Creative Learning Center @ Your Library,” Since the @ your Library campaign slogan was developed when I was President of ALA, it's personally rewarding for me to see that it's still used to herald unique offerings from public libraries around the country.

The outcome the staff and administrators of the Old Bridge Public Library, along with INFOLINK, seek is that programs and services will be offered, not just for baby boomers, but for all three generations of Older Adults—yes, the baby boomers, not yet retired are a target group, but so are all retirees, as well as the elderly who can no longer get to the library. These outcomes that would stretch the innovative capacities of any library in the United States.

**One of the unique features of the design of this Library is the seven sections or bays into which it is divided for service with an individual theme or service component in each space. One of these bays will become the Senior Space.**

**In Phase I during the first six months of its projected three phases Senior Spaces will concentrate on the creation of the area itself as a physical destination to come to for learning, conversation, discussions, books, other media and computers. The emphasis will be on the design of the space, purchasing and shifting already owned materials, organizing programs and signage, recruiting boomer and other senior volunteers, making contact with community organizations to create partnerships for service, developing a learning center with a SENIORNET Computer Learning Component, opening a Job Information Center with a priority on second careers and putting together an Advisory Board. It's anticipated that ultimately the Senior Space will be open to membership to baby boomers and other older adults in the entire INFOLINK Region. Is that a challenging agenda?**

**Plans in Phase II include the establishment of a Web Presence to inform the community, the target audience and the profession of what Senior Spaces is and what it's doing. It will include access to a workbook/manual to help other libraries develop their own step by step Space ([www.Imxac.obpl](http://www.Imxac.obpl)). The program's progress will be documented on the web through presentations made at state and national conferences. An invitation will be issued to library administrators and staff throughout INFOLINK's region and throughout the state to visit and see Senior Spaces in operation.**

**In Phase III the Senior Classroom and Lifelong Learning Center will open with SENIORNET in place and a curriculum geared to the needs of the OA, like courses in how to use a digital camera or an ipod. Spaces will connect with the nearby Raritan Medical Center to provide OAs with accurate and timely health information.**

**The Learning Center is on the books for development in conjunction with Rutgers and Middlesex College. A Volunteer Exchange Center will be up and running as a result of**

collaboration between the library and the other community agencies; a Literacy and English as a Second Language Center will incorporate the expertise of Literacy Volunteers and an Immigrant Center will be modeled after the highly successful Queens Borough PL's New Immigrant Program.

The Old Beidge Public Library already has in place a number of groups interested in using this Senior Space: the Monday card players, the Tuesday knitters, the Wednesday scrapbookers, the Thursday crafters, and the Savvy Seniors, an independent group using the Library as their base for programs, social activities and volunteering.

Slated for initiation in October are Senior Fridays, programs specifically developed for Older Adults, which will also emanate from the Senior Spaces.

#### Creating New Directions in Services for Older Adults

The issues the nation and its libraries face with the aging of America are pervasive. We can't run and we can't hide from them, nor can any library or librarian who seeks to bring relevant services to their target populations, which inevitably will include many Older Adults. Within the Older Adult community three groups particularly need more attention from librarians: 1.) The oldest of the old, 2.) the ethnic aging and 3.) women.

Changing demographics place our eyes squarely on the need to serve not only the more advantaged boomers, but also to expand our service to the underserved, wherever they reside. Older adults over the age of 85, often referred to as the oldest of the old, are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. About 1.5% of Americans are 85 or over. The number of Americans 100 years or older is expected to swell from 1 out of 5,578 in the year 2000 to 1 out of 472 in the year 2050.

Greater attention to the needs of the ethnic aging is not just a social or a moral question. It's a necessity for the growth and progress of our discipline and profession. Increasing that attention can capture the unique talents of the ethnic aging, particularly the aging boomers—with their technological abilities. It will also yield benefits in innovation

and creativity that arise as a result of previously seldom tapped perspectives being brought to problems from differing life and aging experiences.

The ethnic aging can act as volunteers and resource persons to capture cultural competency for our libraries through their knowledge of emerging majority communities and individuals. They can also help to supply the library with much needed diverse linguistic abilities.

Within the aging populations, women have a longer life expectancy than men. Among Americans 65 or over in the year 200 there are 70 men for every 100 women. Among Americans 85 or over there are 41 men for every 100 women. The Woman Alone is a fitting program series for the library to offer, centered on the tasks older women face with the major changes in their lives--on retirement, role loss, change of status, loneliness, grief, and preparing for the role of widow. This series yields opportunities for model building and collaboration, in the local, state and national communities.

#### **Other New Directions**

Twenty years ago Older Americans were typically presented as poor. Once people stopped working, their fixed income from Social Security or a pension was rarely adequate to support them comfortably. Today, a greater number of Older Adults, especially among the boomers, have funds and investments that provide them with financial security.

Still 11% of Americans 65 or over have incomes below the poverty line, despite the fact that for a person 65 or over living alone, the threshold for being classified by the government in the poverty cohort is stricter than it is for younger people. A person 65 or over living alone is not considered impoverished unless annual income is less than \$8,000, compared with \$9,000 for a person under 65.

Some elders have limited resources, but have assets, particularly homes, that prevent them from meeting the strict definition of poverty. Fluctuations in interest rates tend to hit older adults hardest because of reliance on investment income. High inflation

rates hit older adults hard as well, because their incomes do not usually proportionately adjusted upward as prices increase.

Even with homes and investments many older Americans may not have incomes that are sufficient to meet all of their needs. They may be unwilling or unable to sell their homes, or they may be faced with increased expenses, such as for prescription drugs, in-home assistance or medical care. The complicated issues involving real estate and other investments and longer retirement periods have made careful financial planning and preparation an essential part of growing older. New financial issues faced by our elders give us in the library the opportunity for equally new responses within the financial arena.

What about the new directions we can chart with Older Adults as resources? The record shows that our elders have acted as lib resources in the past on both a fee and on a voluntary basis. They have:

Instituted information exchanges for the part-time employment of their peers;

Canvassed neighborhoods to locate other OA who are prospective candidate for library services;

Located memorabilia and offered their recollections on audio and video; and assisted in developing local history collections.

To create services and collections that are of interest and useful to other Older Adults documentation verifies that they have:

Developed and presented educational programs on consumerism, legislation, housing and other areas of import;

Reviewed materials, made recommendations on their content and format, and helped prepare collection building and buying lists.

They have edited and written library newsletters.

They have acted as program mainstays in the maintenance of deposit collections;

**Assisted in the maintenance of deposit collections, keeping track of circulation and delivering materials to nursing homes and institutions;**

**Performed duties as camera technicians in video productions;**

**Acted as tutors in literacy efforts.**

**Many retirees want second careers that reside within an intellectually stimulating environment. Is there a match between the needs of Older Adults who want to enter the workplace and the libraries need for new recruits, given research that has shown the aging of our profession. Perhaps these recruits already exist within potential collaborative agencies. They can represent the library along with their original community organizations as mentors, role models, leaders and spokespersons for the young.**

**It is a vast understatement to say that the Older American is an under-used resource in this country. Services offered from the library in collaboration with their community agency allies within the next decade can focus on using the resources of OA, especially in issues important to aging.**

**The aging of the population has put a burden on the country's ability to pay for the services needed by older adults. The proportion of the population 65 or over is increasing as the proportion of the population made up of adults under 65 is decreasing. As this ratio of the older to the younger generations increases, less financial and social support will be available for older people. After retirement people pay less in taxes due to decreased earnings, while the proportion of workers available to pay more into the system decreases. All of which points to the library and its allied service organizations as the locus of planning along the life span for a successful retirement, including offering education on the protection of financial assets.**

**Other challenges for the future are pointed out with a series of questions.**

**Who can transmit the holdings of collections and the services and programs**

**And send responses to their information queries who are no longer able to leave their place of residence or prefer to get their information at home?**

**Clearly libraries and their collaborative partners!**

**Who can help OA plan for a successful retirement?**

**By offering resources and programs that illuminate estate planning, and investment and sponsor objective coverage of the ongoing debate over the configuration of social security? Clearly Libraries with collaborative partners.**

**Who can provide unbiased consumer health information on navigating our complex health care system and communicating effectively with health care professionals**

**On Injury Prevention**

**On Vaccines needed as we age?**

**On screening and tests for preventive health care? Clearly libraries and their collaborative partners.**

**Who can provide a full range of information on the challenges of aging?**

**Orientation to aging and successful adaptation to the conditions that change as we age?**

**\*\*Clearly libraries and their collaborative partners!**

**Who can provide the free training, access, and guidance for seniors to use electronic resources,**

**Who can emphasize Information literacy: the ability to differentiate among types of information and information resources, the ability to use these resources and libraries to acquire them, the ability to evaluate their authority and accuracy?**

**Clearly libraries and their collaborative partners.**

**Who can help caregivers find the support systems available to them where they can learn about and make use of the best care giving practices?**

**Clearly libraries and their collaborative partners!**

**Who can provide cost effective programs to educate the baby boomers on matters critical to their continued independence and become their primary\_ information source in learning about preventive health care to keep them well and independent longer?**

**Who can supply information and develop information packages on:**

**Healthy lifestyles**

**Healthy Eating habits**

**Physical activity and Exercise**

**The Dangers of Smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and alcoholism and**

**Safe Sex Practices**

**Clearly libraries and their collaborative partners.**

**Who closes the divide between the information rich, especially among the Baby Boomers, and the aging information poor by helping the less advantaged navigate the digital divide and ensure just, equitable access to resources, services, and programs without regard to income or economic status? Clearly Libraries! Of course Libraries! Libraries! Your Library and your collaborative partners!**

**To help older adults combat the psychological and social pressures from role loss and ageism, we can also provide them with advocacy training to help us present the case for legislation and policy that support Library and Information Services responsive to Older Adults' needs and wants.**

**Funded from the diminished economic surplus our country is now experiencing because of a huge budget deficit and increased demands on our national resources, library services for Older Adults must become a part of the national agenda. Libraries and librarians across the country, educators and practitioners all, as well as the people librarians and libraries will come more and more to serve as we witness the changing face of America; all of them must become the core of advocates for Library Services for Older Adults.**

But for Older Adult's to take their rightful place in society for the future, and be perceived as the valuable national resources that they are, the library must play a part in building a new image of aging. Many who perceive the importance of services based on initiating services based on the developmental needs of children, young adults, and adults, fail to realize that such a perspective is essential for Older Adults as well.

Gerontologists have provided us with a professional framework for building electronic, print and media collections, programs and services that are congruent with our elders' necessity to plan along the lifespan. They are based on tasks all elders confront, boomer and others, they are the tasks of :

- 1) opportunity, which are congruent with planning and providing an orientation to aging,
- 2) adjustment, and
- 3) major change.

The Tasks of Opportunity include 1) leisure, 2) keeping current, 3) community service; 4) self-affirmation and self-actualization. Leisure activities have the potential to provide the benefits to elders that work-related roles once did. They are sources that produce Social Engagement and end isolation by enhancing status and altruistic satisfaction. Librarians and collaborative agencies can help Older Adults explore and develop leisure activities before they are faced with the free time that retirement provides, so that they are ready to implement satisfying leisure activities when that retirement comes.

Keeping Current requires concentrated effort on the part of the Older Adult. Its vital for intergenerational communication and to ensure that the wisdom and influence of elders has relevance and meaning within their families, their friendships, and their communities.

Tasks of Adjustment center around 1) concepts of aging, 2) family life and relations, 3) companionship, and 5) sexuality.

For many aging requires an adjustment in their perceptions of the roles they can assume while keeping their sense of identity and self-esteem intact. For example, critical issues often arise out of shifting family roles, especially involving housing and financial arrangements that affect the family authority and the independence of the aging parent. Misinformation and ignorance have contributed significantly to the popular definition of normal and healthy sexual behavior in the aging as well. Frequently pluralistic ignorance leads those elders with active sex lives to believe they are different from the majority of their peers. Such different behavior, perceived to have negative social connotations, often goes unreported even in studies of aging. Here traditional library resources: books, articles, bibliographies—can become mainstays in these very personal areas.

Task of Major Change can be met with collaborative services that formulate discussion and support groups for which the library provides information, education and programs that deal with retirement, role loss, change of status, loneliness, grief, and even death.

Living Arrangements become a center for change for most Older Adults. Many people 65 or over continue to live in our community, and even among people 85 or over, more than 78% of women and 88% of men continue to do so. By 65, one third of the women live alone; by age 75, more than half do so. Because women tend to live longer than men, fewer older men live alone. Some older people are able to remain in their homes because of help from relatives or outside services. Agencies in our communities can plan and execute coordinated social and health services with the library that give the elderly the maximum opportunity to age in place. Libraries, as referral agencies, can supply the information about where coordinated service delivery occurs within our community and education on how to gain access to it.

In the past older adults typically moved in with younger relatives if they became impaired. Nursing homes served few older adults, mostly those who had no family to care

for them. This situation has changed dramatically. Older adults who are no longer able to live alone can now choose among several levels of care, including retirement facilities, assisted living communities, and nursing homes. Currently about 1.8 million Americans reside in nursing homes. About 15% of nursing home residents are there for a relatively short period of time while they recover from an illness. Librarians and their colleagues in other services can and do prepare and offer consumer information on what constitutes a quality nursing home, where they are located, what the costs are, and the qualifications the Older Adults must meet to gain entrance.

When the current generation of older adults was young most people died in the privacy of their own home, usually cared for by family. Today most OA end their lives in the hospital or nursing home. Older Americans now have several mechanisms to help ensure that they end life where and in what manner they most prefer. They can choose to be hospitalized or not, to have aggressive treatment or not, to undergo resuscitation attempts or not, to be fed artificially or not. An advance directive document, or living will, allows us to make our wishes known regarding medical care and heroic resuscitation attempts. A durable power of attorney for health care allows us to choose someone to make decisions for us in such matters if we become unable to make these decisions ourselves. Completing and updating such documents has become an essential part of aging. Making certain Older Adults are informed about them and helping them execute these documents when needed, can become part of the programs of information and education that libraries and their community collaborators have available.

#### Health Care and Long Time Living

One of the goals of health care is to help keep older adults independent and functioning well for as long as possible. In a perfect world, most people would remain fully functional and independent until just before their lives end. Fortunately, progress is being made toward this goal. Only 5 % to 8% of those over 65 who live in their own homes need

assistance with one or more self-care activities, and this percent has decreased slightly over the past decade. Even among people 85 or over, one half of the women and two thirds of the men are able to live at home without needing assistance with self-care activities.

The need for good, unbiased health care information runs deep, whether people are seeking to become more active in caring for themselves or others. Prevention, healthy nutrition, appropriate use of drugs and the wide array of diagnostic tests and complementary, alternative therapies are topics at the forefront of caring for self. How to access affordable, high quality services within our community can be the subject of informational brochures collaboratively prepared and available from the library.

Communicating effectively with health care practitioners goes hand-in-hand with caring for self and others. The variety of practitioners to communicate with is vast: doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, pharmacists. And communications take place in many sites: doctors' offices, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes. Navigating a complex health system that has so many types of practitioners and sites for care can be difficult and frustrating. Interacting with health care practitioners and ensuring continuity of care can be improved by effective communication, which begins with being well informed. The library can provide the information and also the educational opportunities to improve the ability of Older Adult's to communicate with their health care professionals.

Critically important for today's aging are strategies for care giving: knowing what kind of care loved ones need and how to provide it. Who can help inform them of the role of the caregiver, how to meet it and how and where to find support for that role is one of the major informational tasks before the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarians and their colleagues in other service organizations.

Today, more than 22 million families have some form of care giving responsibilities to confront. Many boomers are part of the sandwich generation, where they are confronted with caring for both their children and their parents. Care giving extracts a human and

**financial toll on our nation. Beyond providing services to answer this need, librarians can join other advocates in the call for greater recognition and support for care giving in national policy**

**The increase in education among Older Adults and especially baby-boomers who are aging will certainly lead to their participation in lifelong learning activities and their greater activity as information seekers. Senior Spaces has created plans to meet these needs head on. Formal and informal activities can take place from the library's: literacy classes through college classes for credit.**

**We know from studies that older adults' learning activities are largely independent, self-directed and self-paced. In the library elders travel at their own pace; are joint planners in their learning programs with librarians; assess their own needs and interests and set their own goals.**

**Librarians have a role to play in dispelling the myths of aging to all sectors of the community.**

**It will take continuing resolve on the part of librarians and Older Adults themselves not only to change society's perspective to appreciate and utilize the resources of Older Adults, but also to change the perspective of Older Adults themselves for whom society's perspective and the myths of ageism have become a self-fulfilling prophecy. For the human condition allows us, aging boomers and others, to move to what is expected. What is expected can become what we believe we are, which can affect what we are able to do. In the past too little attention has been paid to the ways in which Older Adults serve as valuable resources in our society. That must be the emphasis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for libraries and librarians if they are to furnish the services Older Americans need and deserve. Our elders await our response to the challenges for libraries of an aging nation. It is up to us to fulfill their expectations.**