

SENIORS AND LITERACY

RESOURCES:

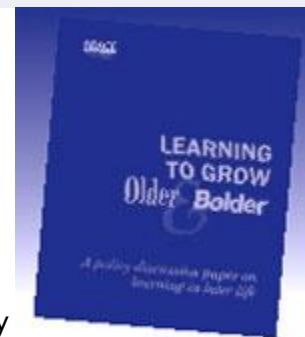
SELECTIONS FROM SENIORS AND LITERACY: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY 2004

This bibliography, recently published by The Centre, provides references and annotations of research articles, project reports, resource guides and other documents that address the issue of seniors' literacy levels and practices. It includes web sites from a range of governmental and non-profit agencies in Canada and around the world. The annotations are descriptive and do not analyse or evaluate. Most were abridged from abstracts provided in ERIC or by the authors themselves. If these were not available, the annotation was written by researcher Claire Elliott. Original source is indicated in square brackets. Excerpts below have been abridged and relate to topics discussed in other articles in this issue of *LACMF*.

Aitkens, A. (1991). *A national literacy strategy for older Canadians*. Toronto, ON: One Voice, the Canadian Seniors Network.

Describes a national strategy to provide literacy education for older Canadians, in response to a 1989 survey finding that 64 percent of Canadians aged 55-69 experience some degree of difficulty with everyday reading material. The strategy includes a rationale, objectives, and a 3-year start-up plan to develop the commitment, the tools, and the impetus to work toward "a society where low literacy is not a barrier to full participation of seniors."

[ERIC]



Askov, E. & Forlizzi, L. (1989). *Assessing the educational needs and interests of students enrolled in a reading program at a center for older adults*. University Park, PA: Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy.

Offers insight into the diverse skills, values, needs, and educational interests of a small population of older adults, aged 60 to 80 years, enrolled in a reading program. Highlights general desire for selfimprovement and self-sufficiency, while stressing the crucial role of the tutor in providing motivation and encouragement. [ERIC]

Brown, H., Prisuta, R., Jacobs, B. & Campbell, A. (1996). *Literacy of older adults in America: Results from the National Adult Literacy Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97576.pdf>

Details findings of the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey with respect to the prose, document, and quantitative literacy skills of senior adults, aged 60 and above. Draws attention to the lower, assessed skill levels of this group compared to those of the under-60 population. Correlates variations in over-60 scores with variables such as employment status, educational attainment, language background and income. [ERIC]

***Celebrating older learners: Seminar report*. (2001). Retrieved January 17, 2004 from the Lifelong Learning web site: www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cols/report.pdf.**

Discusses the aims and background of a 2001 Celebrating Older Learners seminar in the UK, and offers statements and recommendations for good practice developed by seminar

participants. Provides text of selected speeches, summaries of innovative projects targeted to older adults, and suggests further readings and useful web sites. [CE]

Courtenay, B.C., Stevenson, R.T. & Suhart, M.P. (1982). Functional literacy among the elderly: Where we are(n't). *Educational Gerontology* 8 (4), pp. 339-352.

Reviews and analyzes studies on functional literacy among older adults. Results indicate conceptual confusion, an undereducated older population, inadequate measurements, and samples with disproportionate percentages of older persons. Conclusions indicate the need for educational gerontologists to increase efforts at improving literacy education. [Author]

Cusack, S.A. (1995). Developing a lifelong learning program: Empowering seniors as leaders in lifelong learning. *Educational Gerontology* 21(4), pp. 305-320.

Describes the use of an emancipatory education model, wherein 9 older women (65-85) were trained as research associates to conduct needs assessments of their peers. Posttest and focus group results support the effect of learning on seniors' mental, physical, and social health; increased self-esteem; and ability to express ideas and be heard. [ERIC]

Fisher, J.C. (1987). The literacy level among older adults: Is it a problem? *Adult Literacy and Basic Education* 11(1), pp. 41-50.

Describes the low level of participation in ABE by older adults with minimal education, and considers impact that illiteracy has on older adults. Argues that little evidence exists by which to assess the severity of the problem, or to measure the degree to which low level literacy skills are detrimental to the well-being of older adults. Discusses role of reading in this group, the adequacy of commonly used definitions and measures, and makes recommendations. [Author]

Fisher, J.C. (1990). The function of literacy in a nursing home context. *Educational Gerontology* 16, pp. 105-116.

Examines the literacy use of 28 older adult nursing home residents in relation to life experiences and perceptions of retirement and aging. Focuses on the emergent themes of continuity and change between present literacy usage and that of earlier life stages, perceptions of the purpose of literacy, the role of need in motivating older adults to use literacy skills, and contextual support for their use. [Author]

Fisher, J.C. & Wolf, M.A. (1998). *Using learning to meet the challenges of older adulthood*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Seven papers examine the nature, role and impacts of learning in the lives of older adults, as determined by existing research and best practices in the field of educational gerontology. Discusses past policy initiatives, the role of technology, new approaches, and implications for the future in light of a growing senior population. [CE]

Fraser, J. (2002). *Determinants of health maintenance among older adults learning to use computers*. Thunder Bay, ON: Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology. Retrieved January 17, 2004 from the CATALIST web site: <http://prometheus.cc.uregina.ca/catalist/research/Papers/no%20end.htm>.

Reports findings of a survey of older adults who participated in a computer course designed on principles of educational gerontology research. Identifies positive statistical correlations, as reported by participants, between health maintenance variables and

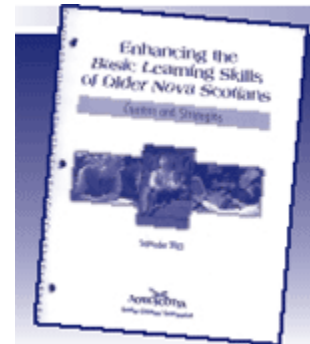
participation in the course. Concludes participation in "learning...is an active choice, which opens avenues of coping and adjusting skills..." that will aid participants in their older lives. [CE]

Freer, K.J. (1994). How the rural elderly view literacy in their lives. *Educational Gerontology* 20(2), pp. 157-169.

Discusses the findings of interviews with 10 rural elderly residents with less than elementary education. Describes factors contributing to an increased need for literacy in respondents' lives, such as a growing desire to satisfy coping and expressive needs, the reduced effectiveness of earlier coping and compensation strategies with advancing years, and the generally adverse effect of low literacy on quality of life. [ERIC]

Goettler, D.L. (1994). *Older adult literacy resource materials: An annotated bibliography*. Regina, SK: Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.

Lists twenty-five titles that focus on older adult literacy needs, issues, and programs. Includes current Canadian literature in the area, as well as pertinent U.S. documents. Materials cover topics ranging from older adult literacy program development and learning resources to titles of selected general literacy materials. [ERIC]



Hart, D., Long, E., Breslauer, H. & Slosser, C. (2002). *Nonparticipation in literacy and upgrading programs: A national study*. Toronto, ON: ABC Canada.

Details findings of a national survey into individuals' reasons for not participating in literacy programs, despite widespread advertising and availability of services. Statistics were based on responses of a representative sample from across Canada, of whom 40% were over the age of 50 years. Most frequent reasons for nonparticipation among older adults included work/family commitments, followed by lack of interest. [CE]

Heisel, M.A. (1980). Adult education and the disadvantaged older adult: An analytical review of the research literature. *Educational Gerontology* 5(2), pp. 125-137.

Offers an overview of existing research on older adults and education, and argues that participation in educational activities may provide relief from social isolation, illiteracy, or lack of information about health care and services, and be instrumental in preventing intellectual decline, increasing self-confidence and enhancing the quality of life. [Author]

Jacobs, B. (1987). *Combating illiteracy among the elderly: A cost-effective strategy: Final project report*. Washington, DC: Literacy Education for the Elderly Project (LEEP).

Describes final outcomes of the Literacy Education for the Elderly Project (LEEP), designed to target literacy education to the older adult. Implemented in 27 sites nationwide, the program sought to establish relevant and accessible senior literacy programs by linking existing aging services networks with local literacy networks, and providing specific training to administrators and tutors in the needs of older adults. [ERIC]

Kasworm, C.E. & Medina, R.A. (1989). Perspectives of literacy in the senior adult years. *Educational Gerontology* 15, pp. 65-79.

Observes that literacy in the senior adult years has historically been defined by concepts

created for youth and young adult literacy research and programs. Explores alternative perspectives and research on adult literacy. Identifies key principles affecting literacy in the senior adult years that highlight relationship of literacy and its use to senior adults' frame of reference, their social context, self-education activities, and age/life context. [Author]

Kenan, S. (1991). *Literacy for older adults: A how to manual for practitioners*. Toronto, ON: The Office for Senior Citizens' Affairs.

Offers tips/advice to groups and practitioners to establish effective literacy programs for older adults. Outlines elements of successful programming: planning, recruitment, training, tools, content, and delivery. Based on secondary research, openended interviews, and participatory observations and experiences of the author. Includes profiles of learning partnerships, and useful facts about literacy and its purposes for older adults. [CE]

Manning, M. (1993). *Education for the fourth age: Opportunities for older people*. Melbourne, Australia: Council of Adult Education.

Examines the educational needs and interests of older housebound adults, and identifies practical issues in the delivery of educational programs, based on findings from interviews with seniors and a research review. Highlights value of education for older adults, but stresses need for appropriate content and flexible delivery systems. Outlines the 'challenges' and makes recommendations for further research. [CE]

McCardle, L.A. (2002). *Seniors' literacy research project*. Charlottetown, PEI: Women's Network of PEI.

Reports outcomes of a research project that investigated the role of literacy in the lives of seniors, to determine the best ways to attract those interested in joining a literacy program. Provides a summary discussion of the literature, a description of interview methodology, and analysis of responses from the male, female, and combined group of participants. [CE]

Millar, P. & Falk, I. (2000). *Seniors online: Literacy and learning by senior citizens in rural centres*. Melbourne, Australia: Language Australia Ltd.

Reports findings of a qualitative inquiry into the use of online technologies by older adults in rural Tasmania. Discusses key barriers, including transportation costs, attitudinal factors, limited literacy, and lack of confidence. Documents positive outcomes, such as extension of social practices, including literacy and numeracy. Suggests online technology provides opportunities for seniors to improve their communication skills, become aware of potential as learners, and engage in self-develop-ment. Promotes the importance of online access centers to creation of social networks and capital. [ERIC]

Mullen, D. (1992). *Saskatchewan older adult literacy survey: Final report*. Regina, SK: Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.

Offers an overview of older adults and literacy in Saskatchewan, based on a survey of 16 literacy programs in the province. Identifies barriers to participation, such as: negative attitudes toward self and ability to learn, stigma, misconceptions of others about the learning abilities of older adults, and gaps in current literacy programming. Stresses the importance of accessibility and relevance, and promotes the concepts of peer tutoring and lifelong learning. [ERIC]

Murphy, P.W., Davis, T.C., Jackson, R.H., Decker, B.C. & Long, S.W. (1993). *Effects of literacy on health care of the aged: Implications for health professionals*. Educational Gerontology 19 (4), pp. 311-316.

Argues that patients must be able to understand oral and written instructions and health care materials. Suggests that patients with low literacy levels need educational programs and materials designed to teach them how to manage their health needs. [ERIC]

NACA position paper on lifelong learning. (1990). Ottawa, ON: National Advisory Council on Aging.

Outlines NACA's official position on learning in older adulthood. Makes recommendations to all sectors with a mandate to inform, train and educate. Calls for more and better quality information, education, and training programs and services targeted to seniors, and for greater inclusion/consultation of seniors in their development and delivery. Touches on needs of literacy-deficient seniors and older adult immigrants. Argues for basic literacy and language courses to facilitate access to information and participation in Canadian society. [CE]

Older people and learning: Some key statistics [NIACE Briefing Sheet 32]. (2002). Leicester, UK: National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education.

www.niace.org.uk/information/Briefing_sheets/Older_learners_stats.pdf

Provides a summary of recent key statistics relating to the participation of older people in learning. Provides evidence from the latest surveys of current participation, recent trends, the types of learning that older people are involved in, future intentions, and the correlation between learning in later life and initial education. Also raises issues for consideration. [NIACE]

One Voice. (1990). *Learning - that's life! A national conference on literacy and older Canadians: Conference report and recommendations*. Ottawa, ON: One Voice, the Canadian Seniors Network.

Reports outcomes and recommendations from a national conference, that brought together seniors, researchers, literacy project leaders, education professionals, community agencies and policy makers to examine the senior literacy problem and its solutions. Discusses the research, experiences, and information shared by participants, and summarizes the historical, political and cultural roots of the issue. Outlines solutions, and recommends that seniors be granted a leading role in the development of literacy education programs. [ERIC]

Paul, M. (1997). *Lifelong learning in action: A report on seniors and literacy*. Waterloo, ON: Project READ Literacy Network.

Discusses the issues surrounding seniors and literacy, with implications for literacy training, program development and promotion. Details the findings of surveys, interviews, and discussion groups with both seniors and instructors or tutors; and offers ideas and suggestions on the development of relevant and appropriate programs. Includes a selected annotated bibliography. [CE]



Perrin, B. (1998). *How does literacy affect the health of Canadians? A profile paper*. Ottawa: Health Canada. www.nald.ca/fulltext/howdoes/cover.htm

Discusses the significant impact that literacy can have on health, and explains why the health field and Health Canada should be concerned. Provides an overview of the literacy situation in Canada, outlines the direct and indirect influences of literacy as a determinant of health, and suggests ways in which the health field can respond. [CE]

Roberts, P. & Fawcett, G. (1998). *At risk: A socio-economic analysis of health and literacy among seniors*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada & Human Resources Development Canada. National Literacy Secretariat.

www.nald.ca/NLS/ials/atrisk/cover.htm

Explores the links among socioeconomic variables, such as income and education, and health status, with a specific focus on implications for seniors. Compares the health-related characteristics of seniors with their literacy skills and practices, based on data from the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey. Supports the claim that low literacy skills can impede good health care practices and decisions, and identifies literacy as an important policy issue for health promotion. [CE]

Rutherford, J. (1989). *Illiteracy and older Canadians: An unrecognized problem: Literature review & summary report*. Ottawa, ON: One Voice, the Canadian Seniors Network, Inc.

Summarizes literature about the learning capabilities of older adults, their interest in acquiring literacy skills, deterrents to program participation, and program design based on special needs and interests of particular groups and age categories of seniors. Recommends literacy programs be based on input from gerontologists, literacy experts, community needs assessments and older adults themselves. Offers suggestions for further study and action. [ERIC]

Seniors Canada on-line survey: 2001 senior survey results. (2001).

Retrieved January 17, 2004 from the CATALIST web site:

<http://dev.www.uregina.ca/catalist/research/Papers/Seniors%20Canada%20online%20Survey%202002.htm>

Offers findings of a three-part qualitative survey conducted by Seniors Canada On-line. Describes the methodology, which employed an on-line survey and field consultations with clients and providers of 24 community/seniors organizations offering Internet and computer-based training in Ottawa and Vancouver. Offers a basis for discussion and action on best practices for training programs, and ways of overcoming common barriers. [CE]

Something special for seniors. (1991). Medicine Hat, AB: Medicine Hat College, Division of Community Education.

Reports the outcomes of a demonstration seniors' literacy project developed at Medicine Hat College in Alberta. Describes the successes with a model for recruiting seniors to participate as both students and trained volunteer tutors. Key components rest on the engagement and consultation of seniors at all levels of program development and delivery, and the provision of 'read-to' services for those who cannot read for themselves. [CE]

Sussman, S.B. (2002). *Moving the markers: New perspective on adult literacy rates in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: The Movement for Canadian Literacy.

Investigates how Canadian adult literacy statistics are used in development of adult literacy policies and programs, and discusses technical and conceptual limitations of existing methods used to develop literacy statistics. Identifies demographic patterns within the literacy rate statistics that are relevant to developing interventions for target groups. Five of 26 recommendations focus on low literacy among seniors. [CE]

Weinstein-Shr, G. (1993). *Growing old in America: Learning English literacy in the later years*. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education.

www.cal.org/ncle/digests/GROW_OLD.HTML

Discusses the increasing contribution of new immigrants and refugees to the growing seniors' population in America. Argues the importance and feasibility of providing language

and literacy instruction for this population, and describes the needs and resources of these learners. Highlights promising programs and practices, and outlines factors that influence language and literacy acquisition. [ERIC]

Weinstein-Shr, G. (1995). *Literacy and older adults in the United States* [NCAL Technical Report TR94-17]. Philadelphia, PA: National Center on Adult Literacy. www.literacyonline.org/products/ncal/pdf/TR9417.pdf

Examines literacy needs and resources of older adults in the U.S., based on individual profiles and demographic trends that have implications for literacy education. Investigates cognitive, physical, sociocultural, and motivational factors that influence learning and literacy acquisition among elderly, and examines availability/ appropriateness of existing literacy services. Offers recommendations for research, policy and programming. [Author]

Wolf, Mary Alice. (1994). *Older adults: Learning in the third age*. Columbus, OH: Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education, the Ohio State University.

Examines and synthesizes the literature about persons over 60 – the Third Age -- particularly as they engage in learning. The discussion spans the literature of psychology, sociology, gerontology, education, and other fields, and relates to four main themes: the inner life, cognitive changes of aging, psychosocial development, and socioeconomic factors. Concludes with speculations about the direction and structure of the field of educational gerontology. (Includes 256 references and a list of resources.) [ERIC]

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The printing was funded by Canada Post. The full text can be downloaded from http://www.nald.ca/province/que/litcent/Publication_Products/ab-seniors/cover.htm