

Chapter 8 – Local Connections

There are many entities within the community which can help library staff develop and promote library services for seniors. Whether the library joins an established coalition for senior services, organizes a coalition, or develops an informal relationship with one or more of these agencies or businesses, working with agencies which serve seniors is crucial to the successful development of senior services. This chapter discusses some of the many agencies, organizations, and businesses with which libraries should consider building relationships to build resources and develop quality services.

Area Agencies on Aging

Each local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is the authority on aging issues within its community. Connecting with the administrative staff of the regional AAA gives library staff access to a large quantity of information concerning the general status of seniors in the area. The AAA staff can provide information which may help to identify potential library patrons, as well as help in the development of exemplary programs and services for seniors. Additionally, AAAs can assist in the library's promotional and outreach efforts. Consider using their community-based programs for distribution of brochures concerning the library's services, or using their home-based programs to deliver library materials.

Funds for Area Agencies on Aging are provided under the amended Older Americans Act of 1965 and administered by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Each of the ten AAAs in Missouri plans and develops the services and programs it offers based on the needs of the communities it serves. The projects and programs which AAAs facilitate make a difference in the lives of all seniors, regardless of whether they remain in their own homes or move to assisted care facilities.

The services provided by AAAs fall into five broad categories. Within each category there are a range of programs that serve to make a difference in the lives of all older adults. The services of regional AAAs may include:

1. Information and access services

- Information and referral/assistance is a source for locating services available from an AAA agency or another community service provider.
- Health insurance counseling helps beneficiaries understand Medicare, Medicare+Choice, Medicaid, Medigap, and other insurance alternatives.
- Care assessment and management services help determine seniors' status and social, physical, and psychological needs.

- Transportation services provide seniors with rides to critical destinations such as doctors' offices or pharmacies.
- Caregiver support services provide education and resources to caregivers, enabling them to provide care to seniors while maintaining their own quality of life.
- Retirement planning and support services help older adults plan for their retirement, with a focus on pensions, legal issues, and lifestyle options.

2. Community-based services

- Employment services help individuals find meaningful work and offer counseling, education, and placement.
- Senior centers offer a meeting place where older people can enjoy camaraderie. Senior centers may serve as congregate meal sites.
- Congregate meals are served at senior centers, schools, hospitals, and other sites to provide seniors low-cost, nutritious meals.
- Adult day care is a community-based service providing a safe facility for caregivers to place functionally impaired adults.

3. In-home services

- Meals-on-Wheels delivers mid-day and evening meals to individuals who cannot shop or prepare their own meals. Volunteers, who also provide a sense of security and social contact, deliver the low-cost meals.
- Homemakers and chore services help seniors with the daily tasks of maintaining a household, such as shopping and housekeeping. Chore services include yard and house repair and maintenance.
- Telephone reassurance and friendly visiting services provide homebound older adults with contact to the world outside their habitats. Friendly visitors may act as library ambassadors and deliver library service materials to seniors who are homebound.
- Energy assistance and weatherization services help low-income people pay fuel bills and weatherize their homes.
- Home health and personal care services provide homebound individuals with skilled nursing care and assistance with bathing, feeding, and other daily life activities.
- Respite care provides family members with a break from care-giving responsibilities for a short period of time.

4. Housing

- Senior housing is designed to accommodate the needs and preferences of independent older adults.
- Alternative community-based living facilities offer a range of housing options that bridge the gap between independent living and adult foster care.

5. Elder Rights

- Legal assistance provides advice and counsel for older persons and their families.
- Elder abuse prevention programs are designed to alleviate situations of abuse, neglect, or self-neglect. There are specific programs such as adult protection and guardianship/conservatorship to halt these abuses.
- Ombudsmen services for complaint resolution provides a spokesperson to investigate and, when possible, resolve complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents of long-term care facilities.

Area Agencies on Aging serve as clearinghouses to gather and distribute information to improve the quality of lives of seniors. They closely evaluate the communities they serve and develop services to address their needs. They seek grant funds to provide new programs and services. They are generally the single most knowledgeable agency to which the library can turn to learn more about the needs of seniors, the services that exist to fulfill those needs, and what gaps in services exist. They can provide a crucial connection between libraries and community seniors.

Community Connection

The Community Connection, at www.communityconnection.org, is a statewide database which provides information on a wide variety of resources, both public and private, available to Missourians. It is managed by University Outreach & Extension and has over one hundred partners throughout the state. One of its focal points is services for older adults. It connects health and human services agencies, businesses, schools, government resources, religious organizations, and libraries. Community Connection is an essential starting point for coalition building and a fundamental information and referral resource for libraries.

Community Connection's goals are to: 1) improve access to information about community resources; 2) enable community resource providers to make information about their services widely available and easily found; 3) enhance information sharing, referral, and collaboration among community resources; and 4) strengthen communities.

Community Connection's extensive database can be used to put people in need of aid in touch with appropriate state and local resources. Searches can be done by name, keyword, geographical service area, and organizational network. Community

Connection makes the home pages of the resources, as well as their e-mail addresses, directly available to users as hyperlinks. It is also possible to print custom directories, mailing labels, or asset maps using the directory.

The Community Connection website provides clear instructions for searching the database, as well as how to enter your library as a local “connection.” Online and toll-free support are maintained.

In an effort to strengthen local partnerships the Community Connection conducts local workshops and training in the areas of resource information and referral, networking, collaboration, and programming needs.

Community Connection encourages all Missouri libraries to link to the database. By becoming part of Community Connection’s database, libraries will reach more potential patrons and become more visible to the community.

Other Community Resources

There are many organizations, clubs, and businesses (both profit and nonprofit) within the library’s service area which can help share information concerning seniors and help promote library activities. Many may serve as financial resources, since seniors contribute to their financial success. These organizations can be divided into the following general categories of community or civic organizations, daily living entities, learning and cultural resources, health care organizations, and recreational outlets.

Community and Civic Organizations

Community and civic organizations act to ensure safety nets are available to those in need, and have services to seniors as part of their mission. These are organizations whose members or staffs unite to facilitate changes for the betterment of the community. Some of these entities are also part of national or state entitlement programs, but offer local community connections.

American Red Cross – As one of its activities, the American Red Cross provides “elder services,” which promote strong family life. This organization may be able to offer programming assistance for libraries in its service area, as well as help promote library services for older adults.

Churches, synagogues, and other faith-based communities - Attending worship services continues to be an activity in which many people participate for as long as possible. There are many clubs and social organizations within the units which are designed to encourage the inclusion of seniors. These organizations may help market the library’s programs and share ideas for educational programs for older adults. Faith-based communities are good resources for connecting with new immigrants who may not currently be library patrons.

Missouri Lions Club – The local Lions Club chapter can help the library with financial and referral services and support. The members of this service organization are dedicated to helping people with low vision. The club may be able to help sponsor a program on preventing blindness or help purchase closed circuit televisions (devices which help persons with low vision see print and/or objects more clearly). Contact the state Lions Club headquarters at (573) 635-1772 to identify local chapters.

Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul Society - These groups often offer financial assistance to low-income individuals. As part of their daily work, they are in contact with seniors who may be looking for on-going educational or informational services, such as those libraries provide. Consider supplying them with library brochures to distribute.

Scouts – Local Girl and Boy Scout troops have merit badge programs for their members based on intergenerational activities. Consider contacting your local scouting agency about the possibility of developing an intergenerational program together.

United Way Agencies - The goal of the United Way is to improve the well-being of the community. These agencies can help the library's marketing efforts by distributing brochures and promotional items to the families it reaches. These agencies can also assist the library by providing information concerning the needs of underserved older adults.

Agencies, Businesses, and Organizations Supporting Daily Living

These entities provide for the daily needs of society, such as food, shelter, clothing, and life's other amenities.

Adult day care centers - Licensed adult day care centers provide programs of therapeutic, rehabilitative, social, and leisure activities in a monitored setting. These organizations will likely welcome library sponsored outreach programs for their clients. Additionally, they can pass along "in-library" programming information to caregivers as they pick up their family members at the end of the day.

Assisted living facilities and nursing homes - Often activity directors at nursing homes or assisted living facilities are seeking community resources, such as libraries, to become part of their recreation and stimulation team. Plan to meet with the facility and activity directors and share information about library services for seniors. Staffs of these facilities often attempt to find low-cost or free events for their mobile residents to attend; the library can and should be one of the places they consider. The staff and residents of these facilities can benefit from library outreach programs.

Department and grocery stores - Seniors are consumers. These stores may donate merchandise and gift certificates for senior programs. Check to see on which days

they may offer “senior discounts.” Senior discount days provide opportunities to meet and interview seniors as part of your efforts to involve them in the planning process.

Experience Works- This agency, discussed in Chapter 9, offers the library access to a pool of older adult workers. Connecting with Experience Works also provides the library with a resource for gathering information on the needs of lower income seniors.

Financial institutions - These institutions rely on keeping customers. They can provide funding, donate promotional items to use as giveaways, furnish speakers on various financial topics, and distribute library brochures and flyers.

Funeral homes - As people live longer, they find themselves paying more courtesy visits to funeral homes for friends and survivors. The largest customer base of the funeral business is older adults. Many funeral homes offer grief-counseling programs and can provide financial support for programs.

Hair care shops or salons - Staff of these businesses may be willing to present a program on cosmetology tips for older adults, or partner with the library on programming by offering gift certificates for services.

Insurance agencies - These businesses are increasing their marketing efforts to older adults. Insurance agencies may be willing to help distribute library promotional materials, as well as to provide speakers and funding for library programming and service needs.

Project EARN (314) 241-3464 and **Project ENCORE** (913) 451-0241 - These agencies place older adults in all types of jobs. Project EARN is headquartered in St. Louis and has offices throughout the state. Project ENCORE is a program coordinated by the Jewish Community Center of Kansas City and reports having more employment offers than it can fill. They can even offer the library potential employees who, in addition to working, will give the library staff input on senior library issues.

Public transportation agencies – Many older adults depend on public transportation. Communicating the transportation needs of seniors to officials at these agencies will help them understand the importance of libraries in the lives of some seniors. The library can advocate for closer bus stops and a hassle-free response when seniors call for a ride to the library. Providing the “door-to-door” division with a list of the library’s scheduled programs in a timely manner may help them schedule staff and vehicles.

Real estate agencies - As older adults change living styles, they become customers of real estate agencies. Local real estate agencies are extremely knowledgeable about demographic changes in the library’s immediate neighborhood. This will help to determine community needs for older adults. Real estate agents are also potential speakers for programs and may offer financial support for programming or services.

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind - As people age, some experience vision loss and turn to this organization for assistance. District offices throughout the state help per-

sons losing their vision develop independent living, vocational, and business skills. Advice on media format for collection development needs can be secured from this organization. Rehabilitation Services for the Blind can also assist the library by distributing informational brochures and promotional information. The agency's web address is www.dss.state.mo.us/dfs/rehab/rehab.htm.

Subsidized housing - Three agencies, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (www.hud.gov), the Missouri Housing Development Commission (www.mhdc.com/mhdc_main.htm), and Missouri Rural Development (www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp/mo.html), help seniors find affordable housing. These agencies can provide a listing of senior subsidized housing units. Marketing to these units can garner a new audience of previously unserved customers.

Utilities – All seniors who live independently are billed for the use of utilities, such as water, electricity, gas, and waste removal. Utility companies may be willing to insert a library bookmark announcing senior services into the bills of customers who receive senior discounts.

Lifelong Learning and Culture

These are entities which provide seniors with learning opportunities and offer mental stimulation.

Colleges and universities – The Elderhostel Institute Network partners with colleges and universities nationwide to sponsor independent Institutes for Learning in Retirement. For a list of Missouri affiliated Institutes for Learning in Retirement, visit www.elderhostel.org/EHIN/ehinst.htm. Consider partnering with these and other institutions in your area to develop special sessions that will appeal to seniors interested in learning about new topics.

LIFT-Missouri – LIFT-Missouri is Missouri's literacy resource center, providing the state with resources to increase the residents' literacy rate. LIFT-Missouri collaborates with many literacy projects throughout the state. The agency's resources include a directory of literacy providers in Missouri, a listing of useful videos for staff development which are available for loan from LIFT (including the title *Getting Over*, an overview of a seniors tutoring program), and an electronic discussion group. LIFT is a good source for literacy information. Contact them at (800) 729-4443, or visit them on their website at literacy.kent.edu/~missouri/. In addition, the websites for Laubach Literacy (www.laubach.org/USProgram.missouri.html) and Literacy Volunteers of America (www.literacyvolunteers.org/home/index.htm) will yield information for local sources. Contact the literacy consultant at the Missouri State Library for additional assistance with literacy issues.

Local primary and secondary schools – Schools are often looking for programs which are intergenerational. Consider speaking with the local school administration and

librarians about developing programs and activities which can enhance services to youth and seniors. Youth and senior book discussion groups have been successful in many libraries. A Kansas library works with the local school district to provide evening presentations at which older adults speak about local history, military events, and other topics. Students who attend the sessions receive extra credit in social studies and history classes. The program has been incredibly successful and both the students and the older adult speakers have indicated their desire to continue the programs.

Missouri Arts Council - The Missouri Arts Council, a state agency and division of the Department of Economic Development, provides grants to nonprofit organizations to encourage and stimulate the growth, development, and appreciation of the arts in Missouri. The Missouri Arts Council supports community arts programs, festivals programs, and minority arts programs. For in-depth information visit their website at www.missouriartscouncil.org/.

Missouri Assistive Technology - This program helps educate older adults on the subject of assistive devices, items which can help make life easier as aging starts to affect various biological functions. Staff of the Assistive Technology office can offer library staff with an overview of what these devices are and how they help older adults. They can provide materials for programming. Their phone number is (800) 647-8557. Visit the Assistive Technology website at www.dolir.state.mo.us/matp/.

Missouri Center for the Book - The Missouri Center for the Book promotes the importance of books and reading to Missouri residents, celebrates the state's literary heritage, and recognizes the contributions of Missouri's authors, book illustrators, booksellers, publishers, librarians, and others involved in the literary arts. For more information, call the Center at (800) 325-0131, ext. 8 or visit them on the web at mosl.sos.state.mo.us/lib-ser/libpub/mcb/mcb.html.

Missouri Folk Arts Program - The objectives of this organization are to identify and document Missouri's living traditional/folk artists in an accessible database and build appreciation for the state's artistic heritage through public programs, publications, exhibitions, and special programs. Staff members can help the library connect with area artists for programming needs. Contact the program at (573) 882-6296.

Missouri Humanities Council – This cultural organization sponsors approximately 600 public programs each year. The mission is to help the people of Missouri learn about their history, their literature, and the ideas that shaped democracy. The Missouri Humanities Council promotes community, citizenship, and lifelong learning through programming. The council provides grants in support of humanities professors to lead library book discussion groups. The council's speaker's bureau offers up to two speakers per year to nonprofit organizations. For information on applying for a grant, visit the council's website at www.mohumanities.org.

Newspapers and specialized senior publications - Some local newspapers publish supplements which focus on activities and services for seniors. In addition to being a

good source for promoting the library, these publications provide library planners with the names of businesses and agencies that are targeting seniors with direct advertising. These agencies or businesses may make good partners or sponsors. There are also independent advertising periodicals which are distributed free of charge. One of these, Mature Living Choices, Missouri (www.MatureLivingChoices.com), lists the locations of senior housing. This can help the library locate living facilities in which to distribute information concerning senior services.

Radio stations - Public radio stations, and those with small to medium audiences, regularly solicit information for their community calendars. Consider sending them press releases about your programs for seniors. Radio stations are also sources for speakers and facilitators for library events.

Television stations - Cable stations provide community access channels that can be used by libraries. Consider contacting them to assist with developing a public service spot or a video about the library's services which can be shown at fairs or similar community gatherings. Also consider the possibility of developing a senior book discussion group program which could be broadcast throughout your area, potentially reaching those who are unable to visit the library. Television stations are also good sources to find speakers for programs.

Health Care

These organizations assist older adults to achieve healthy living by offering access to health products or access to medical professionals.

Hospitals and clinics - Hospitals and clinic staffs see the greatest cross-section of humanity possible. They talk to people and listen to their concerns; they understand the concerns of older people and can recommend programs and service enhancements. Many community hospitals and clinics offer programs to promote successful aging. The library can supplement these programs by providing listings of library books and resource that complement the program. Many hospitals and clinics sponsor health fairs at which libraries can exhibit information and services which meet senior needs.

Missouri Arthritis/Osteoporosis Program - This program provides outreach education and direct services to persons affected by arthritis. Services are administered by seven Regional Arthritis Centers (RACs). They offer informational fact sheets, programs, and courses for older adults. They can become marketing and programming partners. Their website is muhealth.org/~arthritis/maab/.

Missouri Dental Association - This organization has a Senior Care Program, for persons 60 or over. Consider distributing informational brochures in the offices of participating dentists. Participating members may be willing to provide presentations on oral hygiene. Contact them at (800) 688-1907.

Pharmacies - Some seniors spend more money on prescription drugs than on food. Pharmacies can provide speakers for programs on health, as well as offer financial support for programming.

Speech and hearing clinics, vision centers - Even though people age differently, older adults are frequent users of these facilities or need information about these health issues. These clinics and centers can provide libraries with free speakers and brochures to accompany programs. They serve as excellent distribution sites for library promotional materials.

Visiting Nurses' Association - This nonprofit organization's service goal is to take care of the medical well-being of those who must stay home because of illness. The nurses can distribute information about the library and may be willing to deliver books to their patients who are library patrons.

Recreational Outlets

These are organizations that offer activities for exercising the body and the mind.

Dance classes/clubs - Some older adults find dance a good way to meet new people while enjoying good music and exercise. Classes are held throughout the community. Square and contra dances are regular Saturday night activities in some areas. These venues would be good places to network with older adults, locate potential entertainment, and distribute information about the library.

Health spas - Health spas offer individuals exercise and relaxation opportunities. Some health spas are developing exercise classes specifically designed for seniors. Health spas may be sources for speakers for programs concerning diet and exercise for older adults.

City or county recreation centers - Many communities support recreation centers that allow residents to create arts and crafts, play games, exercise, and participate in sports activities. Some centers support specialized activities for older adults. These are excellent partners for cosponsoring activities and events focussing on leisure and sports. Recreation center staff may also be able to distribute library announcements and provide speakers for programs.

Travel Agencies - Travel agencies develop tours, which offer individuals the opportunity to see the world, or to see their own community in a different light. Some travel agencies design tours specifically for older adults. Travel agencies may be able to provide the library with speakers and posters for programming purposes.

YMCA and YWCA - These agencies conduct foster grandparents programs, which pair seniors with runaway youth, and the YMCA has an official national program for older adults. Partnering with either agency can provide the library with programming and service benefits as it reaches a new audience.