Older Adults and Technology

Karen L. Fortuna, PhD, LICSW
Assistant Professor
Dartmouth College

Alyssa Gocinski, BA
MSW Candidate
Boston, College

San Francisco Village members participate in an improv class one Thursday evening.

Courtesy of Kate Hospke, executive director, San Francisco Village
Thank you to ADvancing States
The Story of Bonnie Weiss

The last real disaster Bonnie Weiss lived through was San Francisco’s 1989 earthquake. Even watching a piece of chimney break through her living room window didn’t prepare her to live alone during a global pandemic, she says. Weiss is nearing 80 years old, and has no children. Her partner, who’s ill and more susceptible to catching coronavirus, lives 30 miles away. She wishes she could hug or cuddle or hold hands with him, or with anyone. But San Francisco just extended its shelter-in-place, so at least until the end of May, that will be impossible.

“We’re all going through it together,” she said. “That’s the only thing that’s a little consoling.”

What Motivates Older Adults to Use Technology

- Connection to family/ friends
- Health services and maintenance
- Entertainment and hobbies
- Activities for independence (maintaining finances, paying bills, etc.)
Older Adults’ Attitudes Toward Technology

- **Perceived ease of learning (Older Adults)**
  - Apprehensive when clear instructions or assistance are not present in the learning process

- **Social influence (Older adults + and younger adults -)**


Kim S, Choudhury A Comparison of Older and Younger Adults’ Attitudes Toward the Adoption and Use of Activity Trackers. *JMIR Mhealth Uhealth* 2020;8(10):e18312
Older Adults’ Attitudes Toward Technology: Role Play
Does the Digital Divide Exist?

Studies show more older adults than ever have adopted smartphones — 42%, according to Pew — and 67% say they have Internet access. At the same time, only a quarter of adults over 65 say they feel confident about using electronics to go online.
Barriers to Adoption and Use of Aging Services Technologies
Barriers to Adoption and Use of Aging Services Technologies

- Lack of awareness and evidence of effectiveness
- Stigma
- Privacy and security
- Usability
- Provider/peer support specialists’ workflow and interoperability
- Provider/peer support specialists’ liability
- Lack of meaningful incentives for associated payers (i.e. evidence supporting cost-effectiveness)
- Training staff and person served
Strategies to Promote Adoption of Aging Services Technologies

- Peer-reviewed research and knowledge dissemination
- Widespread education on available technologies/ benefits
- Addressing factors important to older adults
- Transparent data-sharing policies, informed consent, option to opt-out of data sharing
- Multiple ways to connect (preference)
Emerging technologies for older adults are:

- Sensors
- Wearables
- Robots
- Smartphone apps

Mois, G., & Fortuna, KL. *Visioning the future of gerontological digital social work.*
OLDER ADULTS’ PREFERENCES IN USING TECHNOLOGY

• In a study that focused on technology frequency and preferences differences by age, 68% of older adults reported “occasionally” or “frequently” using the internet, compared to 91% of younger adults\(^1\).

• Older adults used the internet primarily for communication, community information, and news, whereas younger adults used it for communication, entertainment, and news\(^1\).

• A 2016 study of adults (ages 60-90) investigated the effects of tablet use and associated software on cognition and everyday functioning\(^2\).

• Results concluded that older adults may prefer tablets to computers or other technologies due to their portability and accessibility/usability advantages that are in line with the needs of aging adults\(^2\).

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WHAT DO OLDER ADULTS USE TECHNOLOGY FOR?

- Connecting with family
- Connecting with friends
- Medication management
- Money management
- Health management and telehealth appointments
- Games
OLDER ADULTS’ TRAINING PREFERENCES

• In a study of older adults’ training needs and preferences, participants responded that they wanted training related to many technology items.

• Specifically, they wanted task-related training, as compared to more generalized training (i.e. enabling caller ID, creating powerpoint presentations, making films, downloading pictures to the computer and sending them, and setting parental controls on televisions).

• The data found suggested that older adults own a variety of technologies, yet they may not fully utilize them.

• When asked “who” older adults prefer to be trained by, 32% responded that they would prefer to teach themselves and 24% would prefer to be taught by a family member/peer.

• The top 2 responses for preferred methods of teaching were manuals/written instructions (33%) and one-on-one instruction (18%).

• 52% of participants said they would like training on technologies at the time of purchase, and another 22% reported wanting training upon first use of the technology.

• When asked about preferred locations for technology trainings, older adults suggested stores and companies, senior centers, libraries, home, and schools.
ADULT LEARNING THEORY + NORMAL AGING

- Need to know why they need to learn
- Need to learn experientially
- Approach learning as problem solving
- Learn best when the topic is of immediate value
- Teacher relinquishes authority and becomes a facilitator
- Bring a package of experiences and values – each unique
- Bring expectations about the learning process
- Have competing interests – the realities of their lives
- Have their own set patterns of learning
- Learner’s past experiences used in process
- Don’t forget normal age-related changes in cognition, memory, dexterity changes
If you are building a technology program or supporting older adults....
How to Teach Older Adults About Technology

- Be patient
- No tech shaming (we were all new to technology at one point)
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Take it one step at a time
- Utilize different teaching styles
- I, We, You method
- Utilize online tutorials
- Practice, practice, practice!
“I”, “We”, “You” Method: Role Play
Collaterals
• YouTube tutorials
  • Ex. “how to create a powerpoint”
• Zoom tutorials
• Medicare.org senior computer classes
• GCF Global: free online tech basics and literacy tutorials with written, picture, and video instructions
• Local peer-run clubhouses
MON NOVEMBER 16 | 2:30PM–3:30PM EST
Feldenkrais – Gentle Movements for Life

Online
Learn movements that will help you rediscover your innate capacity for efficient movement. Hosted by Senior Planet NYC

MON NOVEMBER 16 | 3:00PM–3:45PM EST
Tech & Innovation Discussion Group

Online / By Phone
Discuss different topics related to the latest technology trends and news. Hosted by Senior Planet @Avenidas

MON NOVEMBER 16 | 3:00PM–4:00PM EST
Sending and Receiving Money with Zelle®

Online / By Phone
In this lecture, you’ll learn what P2P payments are and about Zelle, a P2P payment service that’s available in many online and mobile banking apps. Hosted by Senior Planet NYC

MON NOVEMBER 16 | 3:00PM–4:00PM EST
Smartphone Photography

Online / By Phone
Come to this lecture to explore your smartphone’s camera and some features like recording video, adding filters to pictures, and using your camera’s timer! Hosted by Senior Planet San Antonio
Affordability and Access to New Technology

- Medicaid smartphone and data plans (Safelink)
- Local United Way (2-1-1)
- Comcast $9.99 a month for low-income individuals
- Free hot spots
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021
- **State Assistive Technology Act**
State Assistive Technology Act

**What is the mission of the program?**
The mission of the AT Act program is to serve people with all types of disabilities, of all ages, in all environments, and provide an array of services to meet AT needs.

**What is the legislative authority for the Assistive Technology Act?**

**What are the goals for the program?**
The overall goal of the AT Act is to increase access to and acquisition of AT devices and services through comprehensive state level and state leadership activities.
State Assistive Technology Act

56 State AT Act Programs

State Level Activities:

• Device Demonstration
• Device Loan
• Reutilization (Reuse)
• State Financing

State Leadership Activities:

• Information & Assistance
• Training and Technical Assistance (includes Information Communication Technology Accessibility and Transition)
• Public Awareness
State Assistive Technology Act

Program Directory: Find your State Program:

https://www.at3center.net/stateprogram
The Next Chapter for Bonnie Weiss

Thank You

Contact information:

Karen.L.Fortuna@dartmouth.edu