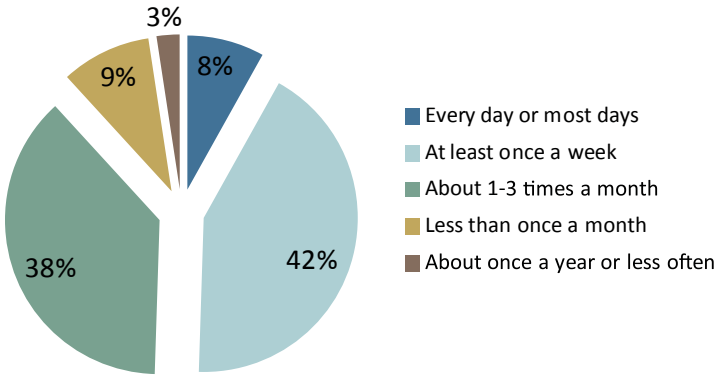
Talking Points: Libraries Keep Seniors Engaged and Connected

June 2012

By the Numbers

- Close to **two-thirds of seniors** reported using libraries in the last 12 months, though men were more likely to have visited than women.
- Seniors are frequent library visitors with half reporting that **they visit libraries at least once a week**.
- While the majority of seniors reported using library computers to access library resources (65%) **only one quarter used library computers to access the internet** (25%).
- In FY 10, approximately $950,000 of the 57 LSTA-funded projects that served older adults in 21 states, which **served an estimated 4.2 million people**.

Frequency of visits to public libraries by older adults in the past 12 months



Source: IMLS analysis of U.S. Impact Study survey data.

How Library Programs Benefit Seniors

- Libraries are an important source of access to computers and digital literacy training helping seniors to connect with family, friends, health information and government services.
- Libraries are committed to provide opportunities for seniors to share their expertise through special programs, reading groups, volunteering and mentoring.
- Libraries reach beyond the walls of their buildings to engage senior citizens who have mobility and transportation issues, providing service in senior centers and nursing homes.
- Libraries provide a safe, comfortable, and inviting setting at which older members of the community are treated with courtesy and respect.
- Libraries offer opportunities for intergenerational activity that engages the whole community.

Recent Grants from IMLS help:

- Ensure that the special needs and interests of older adults are reflected in the library's collections, programs, and services
- Create a hub of information about services for seniors
- Provide programming specifically for seniors, based on ongoing assessment of needs.

Examples of Model Projects

California State Library – Transforming Life After 50 (TLA50)

- Designed to help libraries better serve and engage people over 50 by positioning libraries as cornerstone institutions for productive aging
- Conducted three-day institute with 88 participants to help libraries envision an alternative to the predominant deficit-based model of aging and assess their over-50 population
- Thirty-six libraries that completed the training have received LSTA Grants to States funding to meet the needs identified in the assessments.
- Led to the creation of the IMLS Western Regional Fellowship—a year-long continuing education opportunity for library staff to further advance their skills related to improving services to and community engagement with older, mid-life adults. Funded by a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant.

Lee County (FL) Library System – Community Conversations

- With LSTA Grants to States funding, developed a volunteer corps to provide intellectually stimulating library programs for older adults
- Expanded its collection of programming materials and hosted invitational workshops on reminiscence-based programming for library staff and senior service providers

Westchester Library System

- With a National Leadership Grant, demonstrated a new and robust model for public libraries to deliver and sustain meaningful instructional arts programs for an aging population.
- Showcased approaches for implementing creative aging programs in urban, suburban, and rural library systems, serving as an example for similar capacity-building initiatives.

The public library in Hayward, California, held a Multigenerational Poetry Slam as part of their "Transforming Life After 50" program. Pictured are winners Lynn Roberts, Alison Diep, and Judy Tomlinson. Photo courtesy of Hayward Public Library.

IMLS-funded programs and services for older adults (PDF; 350KB)

Selected list of grantees through LSTA (Library Services & Technology Act) and discretionary programs (National Leadership Grants for Libraries; Laura Bush 21st Century Librarians Program) that have provided services for aging populations. This list is organized by the American Library Association's "Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults."

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Through grant making, policy development, and research, we help communities and individuals thrive through broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong learning. To learn more about IMLS, please visit www.imls.gov.