

Producing Productive Public Library Programming for Older Adults: A Participatory Design Approach

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ABSTRACT

As the Baby Boomer generation, a user group that is widely diverse in terms of culture, interests, and occupations, continues to age, it follows that there is a corresponding need for more public library programs and services to accommodate them. Unfortunately, unlike with children's and young adult services that enjoy a long history of specialized research and education, there is little empirical research or education specific to older populations. (Further evidence of this can be seen in the ALISE research taxonomy which includes children's and young adult services but makes no mention of older adults.) This means that practicing librarians may not be sufficiently equipped to determine what programming and services would best meet their older patrons' needs. To deepen understanding as to how to best develop meaningful, targeted programming for older adults, this three-year qualitative study, funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services, investigates the use of Participatory Design (PD) methods, specifically, those of Bonded Design (BD). BD is a PD methodology specifically developed to bring two disparate groups together in the shared experience of the design team to foster meaningful communication and interaction with the goal of designing more user-friendly products or services. In design teams consisting of librarians and older adults, facilitated by PD techniques such as brainstorming, prototyping, and consensus-building, both groups will engage in mutual learning by sharing expertise, in a collaborative process that encourages synergy through diversity. The poster will outline the start of the research process, including such concepts as ethics preparation and review and librarians-as-researchers.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

public libraries; information needs; specific populations

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

bonded design; BD; older adults; participatory design; PD