Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety

Australian Library and Information Association

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National & State Libraries Australasia

Submission to the Joint Selection Committee on Cyber-Safety Inquiry into Cyber-safety for Senior Australians

Introduction

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) appreciate the opportunity to add to the discussion about Cyber-safety and Senior Citizens. ALIA is the peak body for libraries in Australia, including the over 450 public libraries across the nation. National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents the national libraries of Australia and New Zealand, and the State and Territory libraries of Australia.

This submission has been prepared by members of ALIA's Public Libraries Advisory Committee, representing public libraries in each state and territory. Public libraries in each state and territory also partner with their State Library to deliver community education programmes.

Public library membership, on average, is 50% of Australians. In some places across Australia it is much higher. Many libraries are reporting a growth in use from the increasingly ageing Australian population

ALIA's Policy position

Australian Library and Information Association, believes that:
... it is important to also recognise the need for cyber-safety and cybersecurity resources and training for senior Australians. The number of citizens aged over 65 is growing rapidly and this section of the population is not as knowledgeable or as skilled with new technology as younger generations. Public libraries are already providing internet assistance and training for seniors – assistance that is not available through any other public service. This ever-increasing demand includes help with everyday needs such as setting up email accounts, online banking, setting up mobile phones, completing government forms, accessing e-government information, applying for Centrelink benefits, etc. Funding needs to be provided through public libraries for workshops and appropriate resources for the ageing population to ensure a safe online experience.

This submission will briefly examine cyber-safety and seniors focusing on the advantages and the barriers to being online and the role that public libraries already play in training for digital literacy and support for senior Australians in the online world.

It will describe examples of the current delivery of services such as Senior's Internet Training and offers some suggestions to increase the level of digital literacy training for seniors, for consideration for the future.

Cyber-Safety & Seniors

Senior Australians are at risk online because they lack confidence & skills in the use of new technology. They hold a large portion of Australia's wealth and this becomes more accessible to fraudsters when they go online.

In May 2008 the Australian Government launched a comprehensive cyber-safety plan to protect children online and developed measures which included increased funding for cyber-safety education and awareness raising activities, content filtering and law enforcement. This approach recognises that there is no single solution to assisting with the protection of children online, and the need for a multi–faceted approach to educating young people.

These same principles apply to older Australians and their use of the internet as many are equally vulnerable and at risk in an online environment. The same level of resources and support should also be available to Senior Australians in order to prevent their exploitation, increase their quality of life, and provide them with equal opportunity and access to online resources.

The Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation has delivered the eSmart schools programme which has recently been extended to an eSmart libraries programme with public libraries across Australia.

Public libraries are delivering cyber safety programs for children and their parents, many in partnership with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. Libraries also are providing one on one or group sessions on cyber safety for seniors but are limited by the amount of resources available.

 Libraries are in most communities and are places that deliver learning programs across a range of social and economic issues. Public libraries and their partner State Libraries offer an existing infrastructure, staff that are connected into their communities, existing local partnerships with seniors groups, and access to those who are socially isolated.

Public and State Libraries are in a unique position to provide a platform and resources to assist seniors with Internet and Cyber-safety training. Libraries are perceived as neutral spaces where people can go and get information and support without judgement. Libraries are trusted places, seen as civic and community spaces where you go to find out something you need to know.

The Australian Library and Information Association and member public libraries have successfully implemented federally funded programs through the public library network such as the "Increasing Accessibility Library Initiative" funded through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs". This project introduces devices to community members who have visual impairment, enabling them to read via the spoken word.

A number of public libraries in NBN sites are being funded by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy to deliver the Digital Hub initiative. There is a clear connection between training seniors in cyber safety and the role of the digital hubs in developing skills in the community for high bandwidth applications.

Advantages of being online for seniors
- Gain confidence and build skills in using new technology
- Reduce the feeling of being isolated and 'left behind' in a technological age and allows easier contact with family particularly if they are living far away.
- Encourages community participation and social inclusion amongst older Australians generally through social networking opportunities
- E-health
- Educational opportunities
- Access to online government services, e-democracy, shopping and banking

Barriers to being online for seniors
In September 2011 National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre released a new report titled "Older Australians and the Internet: Bridging the Digital Divide".
This report identified the following barriers to internet use that exist for the over 50s
- 'don't know how to use the Internet/lack skills,
- 'confused by the technology'
- 'concerns about security and viruses'
- too expensive/cannot afford the fees and charges' (participants receiving an age pension/other Government support were most likely to indicate cost as a barrier preventing them from using the Internet and/or improving their Internet skills)
- 'not interested/not useful' is associated with location (participants living in regional areas were more likely to indicate 'not interested/not useful' as a barrier)

Anecdotally, library staff can bear out these findings. It is very often library staff who are informally supporting seniors with their questions and concerns about the online word. On library floors, every day, throughout Australia, library staff are showing library patrons how to use the internet or other communications devices and passing on cyber safety training as they are doing so.

Some case studies in public libraries

Libraries ACT
Libraries ACT is the public library service for Canberra and the surrounding regions and has a large population of senior Australians (15.8% of the population in 2010). The ACT has a rapidly increasing population of people aged 60 years and over, expected to grow from 15.8% in 2010 to 19.6% by 2020 (almost one in every 5 people will be a senior).

 Libraries ACT currently provides:
- 'Seniors Only' internet training
- Public Access Computers
- Informal staff assistance
- 'Learn Fast' online tutorials
- Technology tasters – training in Facebook, Twitter etc
- E books
- eSmart Library sessions to parents and children

Lane Cove Library
Of the 33,000 Lane Cove residents in 2010, 18.1% were aged 60 years and over, compared to 16.7% for the Sydney Statistical Division. The Lane Cove Library is the busiest Public Library per capita in NSW.

In 2010, the Library moved to spacious new premises with a dedicated training room fitted with an overhead projector and screen. During the ten years prior to the move, 'Navigate the net' - introduction to the internet classes - were conducted on PCs in an open area of the library.

Laptops, mice and a special laptop trolley were purchased for the new library. Small classes of six seniors at a time have been taught by staff using a PowerPoint presentation, hands on exercises and handouts. During 2011, Seniors Social networking classes were held covering facebook, twitter, blogging and wikis. All these classes were fully booked.

In 2012, these classes will be streamlined and will also include setting up an email account. Feedback from the classes they have conducted shows seniors are concerned about identity theft and the Library makes a special point of talking about what not to do on the internet. Seniorsalso appreciate the patience of the staff, the small group and the fact they are all around the same age.

Once seniors have attended the classes, they are more confident in using the Public Access Computers with informal assistance from the Information Desk staff.

Coolamon Library in the Riverina
Coolamon Library is a small library under the banner of the Riverina Regional Library. Here at The Coolamon Library runs a programme called "Broadband for Seniors". It is a programme designed for

seniors only and teaches them the basic skills in using a computer. The Library has successfully run the programme for the last couple of years with some great success stories coming out of it.

Great Lakes Library Service
The Great Lakes LGA has a median age of 50, one of the highest in Australia. As of the 2006 census 36% of the population was aged over 60. Library membership reflects this, 28% of members (over 4,500 residents) being aged 65 years and over.
The Great Lakes Library Service currently provides:

- Workshops on basic use of the Internet, targeted predominantly at seniors;
- Free Internet access PCs at all library branches;
- Online genealogical resources;
- Workshops on using social media;
- Seniors Internet PCs;
- Designated Internet helpers, associated with the Seniors PCs;
- A range of online tutorials;
- Extensive informal assistance using the Internet;
- Wireless Internet access;
- Assistance in using personal e-readers (this is rapidly increasing);
- Access to online databases.

Opportunities to extend cyber safety awareness and training

With additional funding and support public and state libraries could:

- Provide additional formal and informal one on one support to seniors
- Provide more formal information literacy sessions and classes in libraries
- Deliver cyber safety programs within communities of interest eg bowling clubs, senior citizens clubs and retirement villages
- Create and maintain online activities for self paced learning
- Develop a downloadable cyber safety button for seniors in a similar manner to the one for children and their parents
- Organise in home internet training for housebound older Australians
- Provide an information / alert web using online (library 2.0) resources
- Start Seniors dedicated online communities in the local areas to enhance peer support for cyber safety
- Develop and implement local communication plans, leveraging from the existing high levels of participation in public libraries

Why local awareness and training works

ALIA believes that training people to manage the dangers of the internet is much more effective than merely filtering or blocking sites. That is, providing our communities with the information they need to protect themselves.

Some of these reasons include:
- Training increases literacy, in particular information literacy
- Training promotes independence and self respect
- Filtering requires constant supervision (of what is filtered) and can inadvertently block access to websites with relevant information

If you filter or block sites you protect a person only for those sites, if you teach them how to protect themselves, they are protected from what has not yet been created. In addition, filtering is a form of censorship and denies the right to freedom of information.

Communities respond well to initiatives conducted in their local area. Local initiatives are easily accessible, trusted and comfortable. Local initiatives are able to reach deeply into communities to identify and support disengaged and isolated people.

In Conclusion

- Currently, awareness programs and training for cyber safety for seniors exists in public libraries.
- Public Libraries are in an excellent position to provide training and support to the community but are constrained by the resources currently available to conduct these programs.
- The national network of public libraries provides existing infrastructure upon which to leverage further into communities

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