Abstraction
The proportion and number of wired seniors is small. A grey gap punctuates in the digital divide. The World Wide Web is not a panacea or salve for the isolation and ageism that confronts senior citizens. Yet a proactive and political desire to wire those who are living, dancing, talking and thinking in God’s Waiting Rooms around the world provide one more safety net and social safeguard to collectivize the dispersed and dispossessed. This article uses quantitative and qualitative studies to investigate how and why older populations dis/connect from the digital environment. Commencing with international surveys monitoring Web users, the study then drills down to regions with a high proportion of older residents, exploring if and then how seniors use the World Wide Web.

Contents
Have you got a VD player?
Regional, creative, but (not) old

The story is densely sad. A 63-year-old man lay dead in a council flat for nearly six years before his remains were found. The body of a fully clothed Kenneth Mann was discovered in June 2004, lying on his bed in Walsall in the West Midlands. He had not been seen since a hospital visit in 1998. With housing agencies chasing unpaid rent, two living siblings, neighbors and a series of medical professionals who performed an electro-cardiogram on Mann at Manor hospital and then released him to bed rest, he died without care, compassion or company.

Gordon Lishman, the Director General of Age Concern England, could not mask his despair and anger.

“The appalling case of Ken Mann is extreme, distressing and shocking to us all. It is deeply concerning that many older people are isolated and excluded from society. Over 3.5 million older people live alone and many do not have regular visitors or any opportunity to get out of the house. Many vulnerable older people are at risk of simply being forgotten.” [1].

Perhaps that is the greatest tragedy of positive ageing policy. Those men and women who have lived a life and know so much are easily forgotten. Their knowledge, experience, passion and disappointments are lost without record or care. The response from Annie Shepperd, the chief executive of Walsall Council, was compassionate but demonstrated that such a case could happen again.

“Kenneth Mann died alone — friendless and isolated from his family. This is the sad and shocking story of the lonely death of a man whose life was disintegrating ... The authorities also did not pick up this death and we are deeply sorry that this did not happen.” [2].

This Eleanor Rigby effect disturbs policymakers and the citizens they service. To die alone is bad enough. To die alone and not be discovered for six years captures the quiet desperation and social isolation of our supposedly wired age. More attention needs to be placed on a policy to ensure connectivity and community. As family structures morph and urban environments...
spread, how we age and our expectations of growing older change.

The proportion and number of wired seniors is small. A grey gap punctuates in the digital divide. The World Wide Web is not a panacea or salve for the isolation and ruthlessness of the modern age. Ken Mann had far more urgent needs than a Hotmail account. Yet e-mail and the desire to wire those living, dancing, talking and thinking in Walsall and God’s Waiting Rooms around the world provide one more safety net and social safeguard to collectivize the dispersed and dispossessed. This paper investigates how older populations dis/connect from the digital environment. Commencing with international surveys monitoring Web users, the study then drills down to regions with a high proportion of older residents, exploring if and then how seniors use the World Wide Web.

The extraordinary characteristic of research on older people’s social, cultural and intellectual lives is that there is much data about health, income, ethnicity and regional distribution. There is even some information about their Internet and computer usage. Yet this material is not linked to the answer of the simplest question: why are older citizens not Internet active. Throughout this article, the aim is to balance diverse research materials. The quantitative work from Pew, based in the United States — the most mature Web–based environment in the world — is aligned with governmental policy documents, library and local government strategies outside of this nation [3]. While recognizing the value of this data, silences remain. Through this article, the aim is to create space for the voice and views of wired seniors, alongside those who remain invisible through digitization.

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**Have you got a VD player?**

Peter Kay, the greatest comedic ethnographer of the 2000s, uses his family as the basis of his stories. His grandmother in particular is the fount of much humor. Her use of technology is legendary: changing channels with her glasses case, becoming confused when confronted by an answering machine, and not talking while recording from the television because the chatter may come out on the resultant video. When confronted with the digital replacement for her recorder, she could only respond “Have you got a VD player?” [4]

Representations of older people and technology are a hub of humor. Granddads driving cars (way) below the speed limit and nannas using video library cards in automatic teller machines are a trigger for a rolling of the eyes and a muffled chuckle. When the Australian Government’s Department of Health and Ageing released five pictures of seniors using technology, their choices were disturbing. All five featured men. Only two had women even included in the images. The context for these photographs was also poorly chosen. While women are often associated with consumption and shopping, it was a man photographed using an EFTPOS machine and an ATM. Considering office politics and inequalities, it was a man using a photocopier. It was as if older women had been displaced of daily functions when using technology. They were invisible. While the accuracy of these representations is debatable, of greater interest is not only their rationale but the outcomes and consequences of this selective iconography for older people when stepping up to the challenges of the new and the digital. The difference in life expectancies between women and men means that there will always be more female than male seniors in the 65–69 age group, with the disparity increasing as they age. Therefore, if — as is shown in Australian figures — women are more reticent to go online than men, then there remains a group who will be untouched by Web literacies. The quantitative research conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project provides a strong framework for this analysis.

Pew’s report *Older Americans and the Internet* (see http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/117/report_display.asp) examined the use of the Internet by America’s elderly population. They confirmed that 22 percent of Americans 65 years and older used the Internet. Such a proportion is not only low when assessed as a self–standing proportion in the most mature e–sector in the world, but particularly when compared with the figures in other age groups: 56 percent of Americans aged 50–64; 75 percent of 30–49 year olds; and, 77 percent of 18–29 year olds are actively online. There are marked characteristics of these digital seniors. They are white, highly education and living on high incomes. There are also some distinct behaviors of these older users. They use e-mail more than their younger counterparts [5], use instant messaging less, but are just as likely to go online daily [6]. Such immersion in the virtual environment only increases the gulf between the behaviors and
practices of seniors on and offline.

“Most seniors live lives far removed from the Internet, know few people who use e-mail or surf the Web and cannot imagine why they would spend money and time learning how to use a computer. Seniors are also more likely than any other age group to be living with some kind of disability, which could hinder their capacity to get to a computer training centre or read the small type on many Web sites.” [7]

The digital divide, when applied to American citizens over sixty years of age, is at its most overt when compared to other age groups. The services of e-mail and finding information about news, sport, health and government initiatives would be of great use for those groups restricted in their physical mobility.

While the proportion remains small, there has also been a rapid growth in Internet penetration among seniors. When embracing the online environment, seniors are keen: their daily use of the Internet demonstrates a saturation of technology and its applications in their life. In 1996, only two percent of Americans aged 65 years or older were online, lifting to 15 percent in 2000 and 22 percent in 2004 [8]. While this growth is remarkable, it is clear that this age cohort lags behind other groups. The other significant social change, which will become more relevant as this chapter progresses, is that between 2000 and 2004 older women became 50 percent of the senior Web users, matching the rest of the population [9]. While these figures are important, perhaps this growth has now reached its zenith. When assessing non-wired seniors, the results are clear: “Eight in ten off-line seniors do not think they will ever go online.” [10]

This is an important and serious result of their survey. There is a large group of older Americans who — with intent, justification and rationale — have disconnected from the World Wide Web. With consciousness and clarity, they see no use for it in their own lives.

There are profound barriers to their e-entry. This current generation of seniors was not in the workforce when computers became as standard as paperclips. Secondly, through educational or social isolation, they lack peer or family reinforcement to overcome the barriers of confidence, cost and skill to go online [11]. The characteristic of seniors who go online is that a family member encouraged their use. Without family involvement, community centers may fill in the gap, but it is simply not as effective in smoothing the transition between analogue and digital lives. Through these challenges, it is clear that disability or vision difficulties remain pivotal in actively blocking the wiring of older citizens, regardless of their location, education or level of family support.

This Pew research is important because it separates the use of computers and the Internet. Too often for non-users, all the functions of computer-mediated technologies are clumped together, justifiably creating the sensation of overwhelming and frightening newness. For example, in their 2004 survey, they found that while 29 percent of older Americans used a computer, 22 percent were online [12]. That means there is a seven percent gap between being literate with computers and using a modem. In such a small percentage of seniors who have made the digital leap, there is a proactive need to intervene and assist this group who has already learned so much, but requires another skill to add on to their competencies [13].

The value of this quantitative survey is extraordinary, particularly when moving from the United States and assessing international governmental policy documents. In the lead up to the 2005 election, the Blair government released their Connecting the UK digital strategy. The language of this document was problematic. In his forward with Patricia Hewitt, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Tony Blair offered the following overview.

“We have a range of measures to improve accessibility to technology for the digitally excluded and ease of use for the disabled including giving all learners on basic skills courses an e-mail address.” [14]

The problems confronting the excluded generally, and the disabled specifically, require much more intervention that the provision of an e-mail address. Indeed, those groups attending basic skills courses are not the problem, but do need to be validated and encouraged for their initiative and desire to learn new skills. The profound policy — and educational — question is how to attract and assist the digitally excluded, particularly senior citizens, to these courses in the first place. The Pew data demonstrates that family members are the greatest influence on wiring seniors. Yet the U.K. strategy does not provide concrete proposals or initiatives for groups that do not have this familial advantage. Instead, it deploys ambiguous language.

“Government has a clear role in helping to promote and increase public awareness about the Internet and harness the economic and social returns in a
way that benefits all society.” [15]

Government does not initiate, offer leadership or intervene. Instead it 'helps' to 'promote' and 'increase public awareness.'

Such a statement is marinated in third way ideologies. Government does not initiate, offer leadership or intervene. Instead it 'helps' to 'promote' and 'increase public awareness.' Clearly such language, and the social policy that emerges from it, is not enough to encourage and assist those engrained in analogue modes of communication to take that enormous leap into digitization. To create a context conducive to building computer and Web literacies requires intervention, time, facilities and money. Words like 'helping' and 'awareness' are not actually helping.

The focus in this U.K. document is children and ensuring that they hold the information technology skills in preparation for the workplace. There is also attention to delivering government services online, increasing "choice, greater personalization, convenience and flexibility." [16] The concern is that, as more public services are delivered online, the loss and cost increases for those citizens who are not online. As technological applications become ubiquitous, the consequences on those who are excluded become more serious. This inequity impacts on seniors as half of all non–users are over 50 years of age [17].

Some governmental initiatives and interventions have been effective, such as technological assistance for rural and regional areas. Also, considering the isolation of some older citizens and the role of family members in initiating computer consciousness, Online Centers have been developed.

"In order to tackle the clear inequality of access to the Internet in 1999 we have invested in bringing the Internet into every community. There are now over 6,000 U.K. online centres in the U.K. — places (sic) people can access the Internet in a safe, secure environment and where they also receive technical support and training. U.K. online centres have targeted areas where they are likely to have the most impact on inequality — they operate in all 88 Neighborhood Renewal Areas and in 2000 deprived wards. Centres are in diverse venues ranging from community centers to libraries, colleges and high street cyber–cafes. 95 percent of households are within five km of a centre and virtually all households in the U.K. are within 10 km of a U.K. online or Learn Direct Centre. Independent research has found that 96 percent of the population is aware of where they can access the Internet." [18]

Again, the words 'awareness' and 'access' mask the profound difficulties in assisting those who are not computer literate to take the step to switch on their first computer. While providing public centers for Internet usage is important, even more significant is mapping and understanding the reasons why some citizens choose to not digitize their lives. The U.K. report tracks the main reasons for not using the Internet.

Table 1: Reasons for not using the Internet.
Source: Connecting the UK: The Digital Strategy, Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit with the Department of Trade and Industry (March 2005), pp. 24–25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No connection</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge or confidence</td>
<td>35%</td>
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</table>

While the lack of connection — 40 percent of the sample — can be solved through Community Centers with classes and Internet access, the other two categories of exclusion listed in the survey are far more difficult to address. Consciousness and awareness of online content, with family support facilitating reasons for connectivity, may assist the group with 'no interest.' It
must also be noted though that with the increasing commercialization of the Web, for those who are disempowered and poor and wish to ‘use’ the Web rather than ‘consume’ on the Web, the marketization of the digital environment remains a barrier.

The group that requires the most initiative and effort in teaching, learning and literacy strategies is the ‘lack of knowledge or confidence.’ While the report does not map other social variables like age, gender, race and class over this data, all three categories need to be monitored when assessing the reasons for senior citizens not entering the Web. Focusing on the direct and rapid benefits to be gained in the online environment for seniors may be significant. In a U.K. survey, 66 percent of people aged 55 and over are computer users and found it of positive benefit [19]. Certainly there is evidence for this value.

"Online forums can provide a ‘lifeline’ to people suffering from debilitating conditions, depression and insomnia. For example a symptom of Parkinson’s disease is insomnia — the Parkinson’s disease online forum attracts a high proportion of visitors at night–time, when other forms of support may not be as readily available." [20]

This forum is valuable not only for information sharing but also the building of social connections during difficult times. Parkinson’s disease can shred family relationship, impacting on mobility, language and even the most basic of functions in eating and toilet habits. Asynchronous and synchronous communication provides comfort and advice when it is needed [21]. However the outreach work that is required to give these groups confidence must confirm that the content is of relevance and the Internet gateway is both stable and safe.

The Internet is an ageist environment. The screen is a barrier.

Also important for seniors is to affirm the continuities between the off and online world. They have a lifetime of literacies, competencies, experiences and knowledge. Their lives should be enhanced by digitization, not erased. Users bring analogue interests to the digital landscape. Yet there are systematic exclusions. We still meet older people when buying groceries, in exercise classes and leisure activities and sport in the analogue world. But we are far less likely to meet seniors online. The Internet is an ageist environment. The screen is a barrier.

All literacies are based on confidence, and that includes Web–based literacies. The key recognition to make is that each skill, competencies and literacy is based on that which preceded it. Actually, this current generation of senior women has a literacy that is frequently underestimated: touch typing. They gained this ability during a period where women were secretaries not managers, and in the typing pool rather than the boardroom. This inequality has bestowed a gift: a high–level competency and awareness of a keyboard. Yet when all computer–mediated tasks are compressed into Web literacy, the specific skills that these older women possess are not recognized. There is no functional reason why a woman who has used a typewriter and paper cannot mobilize a keyboard and screen. They require the same base skills. Working from this realization and basis, older women can gain computer literacy through an acknowledgment of the abilities they already possess. Once comfortable with the keyboard and screen, online experiences can be added, tethered organically to the abilities they already possess. Instead, women continue to have these skills undermined. For example, Carlo offered advice to Nev.

“Typing slower give you more chance to think anyway. Most of the people I have seen including myself, don’t touch type, but just use a couple of awkward fingers that appear to move over the keyboard surface with a movement that looks a bit clunky at first, but it gets better as time goes by ... But it doesn’t matter that you type slower, because as I said, many people are slower typists. Doing things on the Internet is usually a lot of mouse work at any rate. Though you can use keyboard shortcuts for some things, depending on the browser you’re using.” [22]

Literacies are based on familiarity. Learning new skills is best tethered to the skills we already hold. Yet the ignorance and depreciation of the time, effort and expertise required for the development of accurate touch typing is sexist. The disrespect of this skill held by older women is also ageist. If policy focused on respecting and acknowledging the value of keyboard skills, and demonstrating how this ability makes computer use simpler and faster, then older
women would go online. Instead, women have seen men get away with two–fingered pecking at a keyboard, pretending that they are typing. They are — implicitly — disrespecting skills held mainly by women.

Positive ageing is an odd phrase, attempting to reprogram and change the ideologies and discourses involved in getting older. Too often, these policies focus on the window dressing of representation, rather than dense assessment of the quantitative data, to trigger a recognition of the wide–ranging interventions required to make a difference in the social lives of the ageing. In Australia in particular, seniors are talked about, and not to. When reviewing Federal and State Government policies, technology is used to ‘manage’ and ‘control’ the lives of seniors, not to grant them agency to live differently and defiantly. For example, in A Guide to the Western Australian Active Ageing Strategy, a goal was established.

"The Active Ageing Strategy promotes policies and programs to encourage employers to attract and benefit from older worker’s skills and experiences. It assists employers to retain older worker’s skills and experiences. It assists employers to retain older employees through innovative workplace practices, phased retirement and life–long learning. It assists mature employees to maintain and develop their skills and to profit from and contribute to the workplace as they age."  

This is a significant and troubling aim. The value of seniors is as ‘older workers’ Their right to retire, enjoy leisure, play sport, use government services and gain respect for simply being citizens is outside the definitions of 'Active Ageing.' The government is imposing masculine truths on these seniors. While half of Western Australian senior men between the ages of 60 and 64 years are in the workforce, only 25 percent of women the same age are at work. This statistic has significant consequences for computer and Internet use. Most people’s experience of technology is derived from the paid workforce. Senior women are excluded from this skill base. Most offices have a computer on a desk. For seniors where this wired desk was not available through their working lives, such embedded skills were not easy to develop in the home.

Such home–based technologies are even more difficult to obtain when reviewing the low income level of older citizens. The median weekly income for Western Australian seniors is $245. Once more, older women are more vulnerable than men. Forty–five percent of women aged 55 to 69 years of age have no superannuation, compared to seventeen percent of retired men of the same age. By focusing on seniors as a singular group, there is no recognition that the needs of a sixty–year–old married couple are distinct from an eighty–five–year–old widow.

| 60–64 years | 27% |
| 65–69 years | 21% |
| 70–74 years | 19% |
| 75–79 years | 15% |
| 80 years and over | 18% |

When moving from work to health policy, the problems become worse. The Australian Department of Health and Ageing released their interim report for Clinical IT in Aged Care. Their goal was to link up aged care services with integrated information technology, to support and improve the collection and access to data, thereby facilitating the support of clinical decisions for the aged. While the goal of improving the flow of information across the health sector is important, the gap in this strategy is the senior patients themselves. Within the health discourse, technology is used ‘on’ old people, not ‘by’ old people. As long as they are controlled and supervised by employers or doctors in the workplace or in aged care, then policies towards old people are ‘positive.’ Yet policies involving older people making active decisions about leisure, health or employment are far more difficult to find. There is a clear need for this proactive independent decision–making.
I like to use my head (although I am not a quick thinker), have rather good verbal skills, and am a bit of a loner. Reading is all very well, however there must be something more challenging. I have no interest in making anything with my hands. HELP, please.” [29]

Instead of addressing the needs and goals of these seniors, researchers spend far too much time with language, and not enough time thinking about how to create space and choice for older people.

"For policy makers the term ‘healthy ageing’ was considered appropriate, and while the term ‘positive ageing’ was viewed as acceptable it was not preferred, and there was no support for replacing the term ‘healthy ageing’ with ‘successful ageing’.” [30]

The goal of technology by governments is to electronically tag the aged, not facilitate the building of community and information sharing which may lead to the development of new ideas, skills and relationships.

Not only are there age and culturally specific determinations of meaning, jurisdiction and application of the term ‘healthy,’ but such phrasing once more embeds seniors into the medical discourse. Individuals can rarely class themselves as healthy. Instead empowered institutions bestow that term on others. Such a statement is confirmed when reading the report reviewing healthy ageing research in Australia: “the need for targeted information to be provided to older persons (of all ages) themselves is self–evident” [31]. Who determines the scale, scope and spread of this ‘targeted’ information? This data is provided ‘to’ older persons, not for or from seniors. There is little value given to the words, experience and needs of the aged. Policy is applied on them. There is little feedback, discussion or dialogue between policy–makers and policy users. While they remain concerned about whether healthy, positive or successful ageing is the correct term, there is no evidence presented from seniors themselves not only expressing their needs, but their knowledge. While wishing to reorient perceptions and representations of ageing, the reality and lives of these seniors remains administered by others, not lived and enjoyed by themselves. The goal of technology by governments is to electronically tag the aged, not facilitate the building of community and information sharing which may lead to the development of new ideas, skills and relationships. There is much proactive and important work to accomplish, providing the facilities, literacies and space for different seniors to live lives in different ways.

The Australian senior population exhibits different patterns of distribution in computer and internet use when compared to the United States and the United Kingdom. While fifty percent of online seniors in the United States are women, in Australia the age divide is also a gendered divide.

Table 3: Computer usage by seniors.
Source: “A profile of Western Australian seniors,”
Topic Sheet number 4 (March 2004).
Table 4: Internet usage by seniors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60–64 years</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65–74 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 years and over</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total seniors</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In all age categories, senior Australian men are more likely to use computers and the Internet when compared to senior women. A social variable not enfolded into these tables, and with clear reason, is indigeneity. The life expectancy at birth for indigenous Australians is nearly twenty years less than for non-indigenous peoples. Indigenous men, on average, live to 56. Indigenous women lived to 63. This is startling, particularly when compared to the life expectancy figures of 77 years of age for non-indigenous men and 83 for non-indigenous women [32]. There are profound social justice issues to be addressed for indigenous seniors beyond computer usage. Yet this palette of statistics renders Australian seniors different from their American counterparts. Older Australian women face particular disadvantages. The similarity in the international data is that the younger the senior, then more likely they are to be wired.

... the younger the senior, then more likely they are to be wired.

The major reasons seniors give for not using the computer is because they see no need for it, the start up costs are too high, or they are not interested in the services it provides [33]. Yet as we get older, there is an increased chance of us living alone because of the death, illness and disability of a partner. Almost one quarter of all Western Australian seniors live alone. The need — in some way — to connect these citizens not only to services but to each other remains an imperative. The infantalization of seniors, the assumptions of dementia, sickness, limited mobility and stupidity punctuate policies. In moving from national policies and the quantitative data from Pew, it is important to assess the goals of local governments and community organizations within those areas populated by seniors. It is here that the voices of Eleanor Rigby and those wired up to Nannanet start to be heard.

Regional, creative, but (not) old

American studies show that older citizens are much less likely to be online than the rest of the population and also less likely to be interested in moving to the digital environment. Urban users are also greater in number than rural. Significantly, offline men are more likely than offline women to be confident that they will eventually be wired [34]. Internet penetration is also uneven, differentiating by region, age, education and income. The Pew studies showed that in rural and regional areas, Internet access and use is far lower. Particularly the southern states — Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and Kentucky — are the regions that show the lowest level of Internet penetration among adults [35]. Obviously, considering the geographical expanse of both the United States and Australia, regional areas are less wired than urbanized areas. These problems are less serious in the United Kingdom because of the nation’s size and geography. Getting broadband to Roebourne or Emerald is far more difficult than spreading the connection to Preston or Blackpool. When assessing policies in the United Kingdom and Australia, seniors are valuable when working or are compliantly manageable within health care. This section of the article moves the study from the United States and drills down from national policy, focusing on two regions known for their senior citizens: Mandurah...
in Western Australia, and Eastbourne in East Sussex in the United Kingdom.

Mandurah is a coastal city with azure waters, chalk white sand and a Mediterranean climate. It is a place of fishing, crabbing, swimming, surfing and recreational cruising. Time is slower. Leisure is embedded in daily life. Mandurah is located 72 kilometers southwest of Perth, the capital city of the largest state in Australia. Granted City status in April 1990, Mandurah’s local government authority serves 54,000 residents. This number has boomed through the last decade, increasing 67.7 percent between 1991 and 2001 [36]. There are no figures in Mandurah for the proportion of seniors who were born overseas, but the state–wide figures provide an indication. Derived from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing, 41 percent of Western Australian seniors are born overseas. This is the highest proportion of overseas–born seniors of the Australian states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Overseas–born seniors — place of origin Western Australia (2001).</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source: “Western Australia’s Seniors,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas, but place not precisely described</td>
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</table>

Besides 41 percent of Western Australians seniors born overseas, a further 60 percent of today’s seniors had one or both parents born overseas. That means there is a connective tissue linking the lives of older Western Australians with the rest of the world. The advantages of asynchronous communication, particular e-mail, in initiating and continuing these familial relationships are important. David Morley’s research in home–based media found that first–generation immigrant women are particularly reliant on and engaged with satellite and cable broadcasting from their country of origin [37]. In this way, the functional isolation in the home is palliated through televidual transcendence into alternative and mediated geographies. Obviously, this capacity is increased through e–mail and instant messaging.

“I love my computer, I belong to four Groups that are with MSN, one group is called ‘Poms Down Under’, we are all here in Australia originally from the U.K., it is a fun group, and we are more or less the same age.” [38]

The sense of geographical distance is shrunk through technological proximity. Yet this group who could most gain from virtual movement, particularly in the isolation of Australia, does not have the literacy or infrastructure to use this space and capacity.

Mandurah is a place of retirement, a tourist destination and a holiday town, much like Eastbourne. It has recreational and sport facilities, cultural centers and public halls. It is a place where leisure and lifestyle are marketable commodities. Mandurah also has the highest proportion of seniors in all Western Australian localities. While, by the June 2001 figures, people aged sixty and over comprised 15 percent of the general population, in Mandurah, the equivalent proportion was 24 percent [39]. Mandurah’s population over 65 years of age was 17.6 percent [40].
Like all new cities conscious of its image, slogans try to name and brand the place. One of the more awkward was “a regional city reflecting community values” [41]. Perhaps of most interest is the title of the current Community Charter and Strategic Plan: “Mandurah Vibrant City: Innovative — Creative — Diverse” [42]. Even though Richard Florida has never visited this regional hub, his ideas certainly have. The remaking of Mandurah as a creative city, with rapid growth and an industry base, is peppered by phrases like “innovation and partnerships,” “vibrant and sustainable community,” and “trust, vision and creativity” [43]. Florida’s ideology of cities naturally conflates youth, diversity, creativity and excitement. Obviously such connections and affiliations are ageist, but do offer an explanation of why the age profile of Mandurah is not mentioned in the Strategic Plan. ‘Diversity’ is noted, but it is a word that is imprecise in its meaning and clouded in interpretation.

What is unstated is frequently more important than that which is stressed and publicized. The notion that Mandurah’s age profile may chip away the creativity of the city remains a lasting impression of this document. Of great value in this plan is that learning is valued and encouraged, beyond the limits of formal educational institutions. Such an affirmation is important in Western Australia. Six percent of seniors are currently studying in a formal institution [44]. Yet the enthusiasm for learning is strong. A fact sheet from the Western Australian government reported that “a large proportion (88 percent) of seniors stated they were studying but gave no further description on the type of institution they were enrolled at” [45]. While it is difficult to determine where these seniors are undertaking their education, many may be attending community centers, University of the Third Age or senior citizens organizations. Win reported how and where she gained computer and Internet literacy.

“Win didn’t take up the computer until her early seventies. As a volunteer she needed the skills for her work so she undertook a course for the ‘mortal terrified’ run by Council of the Ageing WA and hasn’t looked back since. Ten years later Win is regularly online sending e-mails to friends and families overseas, buying products and using tutorials to increase her skills. Her latest challenge is to master Adobe Photoshop so that she can tweak photos for a family history she is writing. ‘The Internet really stretches my creative abilities, it is a stimulating hobby and there is always something new to learn.’” [46]

Win’s story is inspirational, but unusual. Her use of the word ‘creative’ should be noted. Of interest to my current research is that the 2001 Australian census, for the first time, recorded the population’s use of personal computers in the home, revealing results by age. Mandurah’s results show how the Pew results in the United States are not matched in contemporary Australia. Only 38.1 percent of the total population of Mandurah — at any age — had used personal computers in the home. This proportion was then split into age categories.

Table 6: Age of Mandurah population using personal computers in the home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–19 years</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–44</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pivotal, the census data assessed computer, not Internet, use. In reading such figures, senior computer users are a minority of a minority. Because of the way the data was collected, the ‘65 and over’ category was not further specified in terms of those between 65 and 84, and 85 and over. With such a large proportion of Mandurah’s population in these categories, the data would have been significant.

... senior computer users are a minority of a minority.

Before Mandurah tried to brand itself as ‘Creative,’ it used the slogan of “WA’s leading education city” [47]. The focus was on social cohesion, economic regeneration and
development. Social capital is the buzz phrase, initiating informal and formal learning structures. Mandurah became the Regional Education City. Focusing on diverse educational initiatives from books for babies through to the University of the Third Age, learning was the policy focus. There was a focus on particular groups in the Mandurah community.

"Young and older people will particularly feel the benefits of lifelong learning. Older people are a vital link in the learning chain due to wealth of experience. Young people become informed from a very early age at school about the post-compulsory and beyond education and training opportunities that are available and the benefits of expanding their learning horizons." [48]

Within this learning community document, there was recognition that the lack of employment and industrial sector was reducing the potential for growth. Therefore, when the next strategic plan was written, the focus moved from learning to creativity.

The Chief Executive Officer of the City of Mandurah, Mark Newman was both forthcoming and open in his presentation of the goals and initiatives for his region. I asked him about the challenges Mandurah may face in the next few years.

TB: "What specific policy and planning challenges do you believe will confront the City of Mandurah in the next five to 10 years?"
MN: "Employment creation, including quality jobs, pathways from school to training and employment, and proactively managing the issues associated with Australia’s emerging skills shortage are all in the local strategic focus." [49]

The sheer growth in population in Mandurah makes the residents difficult to administer. Newman noted that "some 30 new families [are] moving in to Mandurah every week." Intriguingly, Newman did not mention the older citizens of the city without my direct questions about the cohort.

TB: "Are there specific issues that need to be addressed by Local Government because of Mandurah’s relatively high proportion of senior citizens?"
MN: "While — in our view — the prime responsibility for facilities and programs for meeting the ageing demographic lies with the Australian and State Governments, Council will play an increasing role in matters such as disability access, fitness and diet and associated wellness in a population health context, and in its urban planning process — endeavoring to persuade developers and aged care providers that aged accommodation should be considered in the wider community planning context, rather than in ‘gated,’ purpose-built villages and the like."

To carry his metaphor to the digital environment, it is obvious that the Internet is a gated community, with seniors isolated on the other side of the e-wall. I then asked the Chief Executive Office about the specific policies Mandurah has in place for the development of senior’s Web literacies.

MN: "While Council has not necessarily seen a direct role in ensuring that seniors have access to the Internet and/or the literacies required, this is part of the Learning Community objectives — not only for seniors, but for the wider community. Our Library services and Senior Citizens Centre activities reflect this, with the addition of a computer room in the Centre and a variety of programs from both facilities including ‘First Click’ programs and the like. Interestingly, a recent survey of Senior Citizens Centre members indicated that only some 20 percent utilized the computer room facility. Forty percent indicated they were not interested, and 20 percent indicated they were too busy with other activities, together with a variety of other reasons including those who had access to computers at home."

Lacking this ‘direct role,’ Newman still reported interest in why only 20 percent of the senior citizens who actually use the Centre utilize the computer facilities. As more materials are only available online, particularly for health, education and transportation, this 20 percent level becomes significant. These are proactive older citizens — the joiners. They have left their home and joined a community. Yet only one fifth of this group uses the room. Therefore, to increase the wiring of seniors needs more than a computer facility. Proactive strategies and programs of teaching and learning are required.

Access is only part of the problem. There are also infrastructural challenges confronting those Mandurah residents trying to connect their home computer to the Internet. The broadband
rollout has been slow and patchy. Mandurah is not alone in this infrastructural absence.

“In a national review carried out by the Commonwealth Government it was identified that of the Regional Telecommunication Services and Telecentres Network, only 22 percent of the sites overall had access to ADSL. Of that national average, Western Australia represented the smallest percentage of 13 percent.” [50]

If seniors need to be convinced of the value of online content, then broadband is a necessary service to improve the availability to integrated mix–media digital platforms. Yet Australia, because of its size and geographical challenges, has failed to ride the momentum of broadband rollout. Regional and rural Australia has been left behind in high speed Internet readiness. This problem not only affects seniors. But for a group that needs to be convinced of the value of online materials, broadband is pivotal to improve the content that is available to access.

Local and Federal governments have not been proactive and interventionist in their respect and care for the full life and experiences of senior citizens. When they are sick, health services are available. To mask the lack of superannuation in these older populations, there is a ‘positive ageing’ strategy to keep them in the workforce. Still, the City of Mandurah has managed its older population quite well. The Mandurah City Senior Citizens Centre, opened in 1990, is run by seniors and for seniors. A range of activities and services are available, from bootscotting to yoga, from legal services to hairdressing. Significantly, on 4 July 2002, a computer room was opened, providing classes with qualified tutors. But it remains a minority interest. How and why this facility is used by few senior citizens needs to be explored.

The Mandurah case study reveals both the strengths and problems with a local government stressing learning and creativity in strategic plans, providing the computer rooms but not exploring what other interventions and solutions may be required. The value of e–mail for senior women must be stressed. It may not be ‘creative’ and is a basic function of the Internet, but it is the application most useful to this group — and broadband is not required. In this regard, the key comparison to Mandurah is Eastbourne in East Sussex in the United Kingdom. Eastbourne's population is 89,667, of which 12,499 are aged 75 and over. Eastbourne provides a snapshot of Mandurah's aging future and profile. There are lessons to learn in terms of library services and the transformations of a city when it ages.

Table 7: Eastbourne senior population (by age group).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60–64 years</td>
<td>4,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65–69</td>
<td>4,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–74</td>
<td>5,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75–79</td>
<td>4,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–84</td>
<td>3,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85–89</td>
<td>2,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 and over</td>
<td>1,493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the population of seniors in Western Australia, where a sizeable proportion are born overseas, the overwhelming majority of U.K. seniors are born in their country of residence.

Eastbourne has a much longer and more established history than Mandurah. An elegant resort town located at the foot of the South Downs in Sussex, there has been no rapid and recent growth which serves to place excessive demands on services. The Eastbourne Seniors Club was founded in 1954. It features activities from darts to crafts but also daily computer classes. Their Web site confirms that “Eastbourne Seniors Club specializes in tuition for older people and teaches a wide range of skills on various software” [51]. Computer access is available between 9:30am and 4:30pm weekdays, charging 50p per hour for use of a computer and £1.50 for the first thirty minutes of Internet usage, with 50p for each subsequent thirty minutes. The daily computer classes remain invaluable, placing the digital environment within the context of other more familiar analogue activities [52]. Educational activities and the development of skills are placed in the context of leisure, not work. Quality of life becomes the imperative. In such an environment, computer skills and the Internet are embedded into the
life of seniors [53], offering new opportunities that are tethered to their already existing needs and goals. Similarly, local education and library services are delivered by the East Sussex County Council, showing a smooth level of integration between these facilities and institutions. Through this synergy, lifelong learning is not only a cliché, but a realizable initiative. In Mandurah, indeed in Australia more generally, there is a separation of universities, which are administered at federal level, primary and high schools which are administered at state level, and libraries, which are the responsibility of local governments.

The difficulty in providing knowledge and assistance to senior Web users in Eastbourne is a question of resourcing. Sally Parsons, a librarian in the town, explained the areas of highest demand.

"We also have a heavy demand for large print and spoken word resources and housebound services. Internet wise we have a demand from customers for help with enquiries and accessing the internet where they lack IT skills. This can be time-consuming in a single-staffed reference department. We have also had some IT problems with the initial installation of Internet-based catalogues for the library service, and self-reservation, but the bulk of customers pick it up very quickly — possibly quicker than younger people who have not so much leisure to visit and learn." [54]

The Eastbourne library system is not a service provider for computer classes. The Sussex Careers Service, run by the County Council, runs free and small-fee courses for eight weeks. They use the People's Network computers in Eastbourne Central Library and the Polegate branch, including 38 terminals. Most of the participants in this service are seniors. These graduates then return to the library with increased computer skills. I asked Parsons about the Web literacy of the senior men and women she sees in Eastbourne’s library.

TB: "A survey of American Internet users found that older women in rural and regional areas are excluded from World Wide Web usage. Have you seen this problem emerging in Eastbourne?"
SP: "Our older ladies seem well able to access the technology if they have any wish to do so. I think it is a choice issue, not a capability one, as most of our seniors fall into the well-educated bracket and are busy with all sorts of pursuits, not just IT."
TB: "Who are the most regular senior users of the library — older men or older women?"
SP: "In lending, women, but I would say it is about 60 percent to 40 percent and lots of them take material for their husbands. In the reference department, it is about 85 percent male, 15 percent female — reading papers, checking answers to questions of fact, or looking up companies to complain about things!"
TB: "Do men and women approach the library, the Web-based catalogue and Web-based searching differently? Do you have to mobilize specific strategies to assist older men and women in developing Internet-based literacies?"
SP: "Men complain it’s not working or it doesn’t do what they want and make the staff help them. Women quietly get on with it or ask the staff anyway rather than use the catalogue. (I think this is just the usual difference of the sexes.) It may be the men do use the system more, or they just make more fuss when doing it."

I was also particularly interested in how libraries address issues of mobility for senior citizens, and librarians’ proactivity in ensuring that services continue through social or physical isolation.

TB: "Are there groups who do not come into the library? For example, do you see many senior citizens who speak English as a second language? What about those with mobility issues? What about senior citizens who have lost a spouse? Do husbands and wives go to the library together?"
SP: "Certain minority ethnic groups do not use us so much — but we have a very small minority ethnic base here. We see few of the Chinese or female Asian community. We do see a fair number of East European seniors — they are often practicing English reading via the children’s stock. Mobility issues are addressed by a volunteer scheme or a housebound book box service to homes — we have reduced the use of the mobile library to town locations, although this was a successful service, because of resource cutbacks. Husbands and wives do visit us together in the majority of cases. Widows and widowers use us just as much as before, or maybe more, if they were regular users, because they read more and
seem to enjoy the contact with familiar staff.”

The Web and print facilities of the Eastbourne library are fully used. Resourcing could improve their service for groups confronting immobility through health or social isolation.

Finally, in the context of this article, I asked Sally Parsons about how her purchasing and policy decisions would change if resourcing was not a concern.

TB: “If money was not an issue, what services would you provide in the library for Eastbourne’s senior citizens?”

SP: “More spoken word material, increased housebound service, weekly mobile library service to outlying parts of the town or reopen the town branches for local communities (both with Internet facility aboard to bring it to those who want it), regular Internet services with trained staff to help with inquiries, better browsing areas with seating to improve their book selecting experience, and more copies of the books they want, more bookstock generally. This is what we get asked for all the time, never mind the Internet!”

Her answer demonstrates that with all the attention to lifelong learning and positive aging, the most basic of facilities and improvements are still required. Spoken word books, a mobile library service, seating and more books are easy analogue additions to a library, but require funding. Until these basic facilities are provided, Web facilities and literacies must remain an afterthought. Conversely, an Internet–based solution, of e–books and audio streaming, may also provide options.

Eastbourne and Mandurah, with a high proportion of seniors, do not recognize them or value them as much as they should. As a social fact, it should be stated overtly that the proportion of senior citizens in these cities is high. It is not part of the integrated city imaging framework or strategic plans, because it may harm the claims for creativity and innovation. Obviously, this is ageism. In economic terms, this ageism is blocking a proactive recognition of the value in digitizing leisure and lifelong learning. Education, learning and textured literacy environments for the post–work population are sites of future commercial opportunities.

Hoping that senior citizens will gain this skill without intervention is an error. The difficulty that has been raised through the national and regional studies presented throughout this article is how to enact this intervention. The Australian government is putting material online for seniors — www.seniors.gov.au — yet how to ‘encourage’ or ‘facilitate’ this usage is unclear. More attention, care, respect and funding need to be developed to explore the educational opportunities and goals of those who are post–work and without major family responsibilities. In an age where education is reduced to training for the workplace, the learning goals for those who require Internet and Web access for reasons of citizenship and social justice is more difficult to justify. Older people are marginal and marginalized in educational policies. Aging is a disease to be managed and a problem to be administered, not a focus for proactive policies for citizenship and learning.

Older people are not ‘them’ to be handled by ‘us.’ Increasingly, as our population ages, we are all becoming ‘them.’ Senior citizens are diverse and heterogeneous in their needs and goals. As the post–work period lengthens, this time of life can be refashioned as a time of renewal, rebuilding and reconsideration of life’s priorities. There are obvious health benefits in encouraging social, mental and physical mobility for older populations. Yet this group also has the right to access and use educational opportunities.

Through digitization, cultural literacies — or the literacies of others — can be repressed. An aim of Blair’s third term in government was “changing the middle–class character of the Web,” to ensure that all families with children have computer access by 2008. While such a goal may seem election–time politicking, at least there is recognition that handing out computers or broadband will not create digital literacies. Access is not sufficient to grey the Web. As Michael Cross reported,

“When aiming at the socially excluded, content is the key, not connection. The success of digital television and mobile phones shows that people will go digital when there is something in it for them.”

While such an awareness is significant, there must also be an awareness that Internet literacy is not inevitable, triggered by the availability of hardware, software or content. Questions of motivation, confidence and context, rather than access and content, need to be addressed. One of Tony Blair’s election promises for a third term was to “bridge the digital divide.” Pivotal, they were most concerned with families with children and their Internet access.
Connecting the UK suggested that there will be a time when citizens will be compelled to deal with the government electronically. In 2005 in the United Kingdom, 44 percent of households with children did not use the Internet. Supposedly, households without children were simply not relevant to the Master Plan.

The “problem” of non–wired seniors will die with them. Inevitably, those men and women who see no use for the Web in their lives will die. Policy–makers are already waiting for “the silver tsunami” — the Baby Boomers who are immersed in the digital environment at work and, upon retirement, will continue to be wired. When the current generation of fifty–something’s retire, the archetype of Peter Kay’s Nanna changing the television with her glasses case, will dissipate. Wired seniors will be the normal state. The Web will be greyed.

There are two challenges for those of us to take the issue of access seriously. Firstly, such an argument about the inevitable death of the problem could not be sustained in health policy: denying older citizens access to hospitals or medicines because they are going to die anyway. Secondly, societies and their citizens are judged, not by the wealth of their most successful businessmen, but by the treatment of those people who stumble or are challenged physically, socially, culturally or economically. To avoid the digital divide festering into H.G. Wells’ dystopia of Eloi and Morlocks, with older people left in analogue isolation as families move away, government services move online and banking services become automated, intervention is required. Waiting for a problem to die with the people not complying with new digital normalities is cruel and unjust. It also reveals a problem for the policy punter. When will these people die? We would all live our lives differently if we knew the precise day of our funeral.

Whenever the choice is to do nothing and hope the problem will disappear, or intervene and get our hands dirty in a plan that may fail, we must choose action. It is possible to remake Eleanor Rigby into Nannanet. If we do not, then more Kenneth Manns will continue to die alone. We will — years later — discover many fully dressed skeletons in bed. And we will continue to wonder why. There is an answer, and the solution is in our hands. Kenneth Mann’s death must remain in our minds.

About the author

Tara Brabazon is an Associate Professor of Media, Communication and Culture at Murdoch University and Director of the Popular Culture Collective (http://popularculturecollective.com). Her research interests in popular cultural studies include sport, popular music, creative industries initiatives, city imaging, multiculturalism and education. She has published six books, Tracking the jack: A retracing of the Antipodes (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000); Ladies who lunge: Celebrating difficult women (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002); Digital hemlock: Internet education and the poisoning of teaching (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002); Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and its popular music (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2005); From revolution to revelation: Generation x, popular memory and cultural studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); and, Playing on the periphery: Sport, memory and identity (London: Routledge, 2005). She is a previous winner of the Australian National Teaching Award for the Humanities and was a finalist for the 2005 Australian of the Year.

Web: http://www.brabazon.net
Web: http://www.popularculturecollective.com
E–mail: t [dot] brabazon [at] murdoch [dot] edu [dot] au
Notes


2. A. Shepperd, from Dodd and Hussain, p. 11.

3. The Pew Internet Project is based in a non-profit, non-partisan think tank. While assessing the social impact of the Internet, they are not advocates for a specific position, but provide quantitative data and general analyses, but without policy recommendations.


5. In “Internet: The mainstreaming of online life,” in the Pew Internet and American Life Project Trends 2005 document reported that 96 percent of online seniors use e-mail, when compared with 91 percent of 18–29 year olds using e-mail.


7. Ibid., p. ii.

8. Ibid., p. 1.


10. Ibid., p. 1.

11. One strategy to overcome this lack of direct family support is found in the EarthLink program. It is a strategy based on linking generations through high schools and senior citizens centres. The students learn skills in teaching, and seniors gain Internet literacy and confidence through a six-week programme. Annamaria DiGiorgio affirmed that “the success of GenerationLink is largely due to the remarkable connections technology made happen between two groups that probably wouldn’t have met in the first place,” from “EarthLink program bridges the generation gap with technology,” T.H.E. Journal, volume 31, number 6 (January 2004), p. 8.

12. Fox, p. 11.

13. A fine example of this reinforcement occurs through magazines such as Australian Net Guide. Distinct from the Generation X–inspired Wired, this magazine offers step–by–step guides to sonic and visual media, free software and multiple letter columns for readers to ask for advice. Senior citizens are well represented in this magazine. For example, Vanya and Paul Bryant wrote to the magazine’s ‘InBox,’ "Thank you for the terrific digital camera we won in the ‘picture of the month’ contest. We are delighted with it! Your publication has given two computer illiterate oldies the confidence in ‘give it a go’ with amazing results; we are now hooked," Australian Net Guide (November 2005), p. 10.

14. T. Blair and P. Hewitt, Connecting the UK, Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit with the Department of Trade and Industry (March 2005), p. 3.

15. Connecting the UK, p. 6.


18. Connecting the UK, p. 17.

19. Connecting the UK, p. 28. I wish to particularly note that this figure is not as convincing as it may appear. The definition of ‘senior citizen’ varies through much of the quantitative and qualitative data. In Australia, the data refers to those over 60 years of age. Much of the data from Pew refers to those either over 60 or 65. In this U.K. report, there is a moveable definition of senior citizen. Particularly considering that this figure refers to those over 55 — and knowing that Baby Boomers are far more Web–active than their parents — there is no clear determination of the reality for those not only over 60, but over 70 and 80 years of age. An important task in further research is to be very precise in web research on the basis of age. In my survey of the already existing data, there is little differentiation between those 60
and 80 years of age, yet in terms of Web access there appears to be marked differences. The
younger the person, the more likely they are to be online.

20. Connecting the UK, p. 28.

21. The role and place of blogging in this palette of asynchronous and synchronous
communication is significant. Blog readerships increased by 58 percent in 2004, providing an
opportunity to tell personal stories and share information. However, when drilling down into
this group of bloggers, we see that 57 percent of blog creators are men, and 48 percent are
under 30. Further, 70 percent of bloggers have broadband at home and have been online for
six years or more. They are also well educated and live in reasonably affluent conditions.
Therefore, considering these sociological variables, it is unlikely that senior citizens — even
those online — are yet blog–active. As the blogsphere grows, the diversity of its population will
also increase. Please refer to Lee Rainie, “The state of blogging,” Pew Internet and American
Life Project (January 2005).

22. Carlo, Meeting Place, seniors.gov.au (15 April 2005),

23. “Generations Together,” A guide to the Western Australian Active Ageing Strategy,
Department of Community Development (March 2004), p. 4.

24. Such a goal was also expressed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Network of
Australasia. They recognized that “32 leading employers and found business needed to wise up
and start holding on to a valuable asset ... Most employers were yet to realize older workers
were adept at developing new products and marketing to their own age group,” from “Business
must 'wise up' to older women,” The West Australian (23 July 2005), p. 58.


26. Ibid.

27. The gendering of old age is a significant variable to consider as "A profile of Western
Australia’s seniors," Topic Sheet number 4 (March 2004) confirmed, “Senior men are more
likely to be in a registered marriage than senior women, however this is partly explained by
the higher widowed rate for women. Women tend to marry men older than themselves, and
have a higher life expectancy, therefore many outlive their spouses."

28. Clinical IT in Aged Care, Interim Report, Australian Department of Health and Ageing (July
2003) at
http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/e11ffa331b366c54ca2569210006982f/ageing-
rescare-clinitrep.htm. This report particularly noted the low use of information technology in
aged care homes, with the systems used primarily for administration and accounting.
Obviously, the potential of the patents and residents themselves using technology and
computer applications is not even considered. The value of seniors using computer–mediated
systems and platforms to improve their own health is also not mentioned in this report.


31. Ibid., p. 12.


33. These reasons are derived from the Statistics from Household use of information
technology, Australia 2001–2002, ABS Cat. number 8146.0.


35. T. Spiner, "Internet use by region in the United States," Pew Internet & American Life
Project (27 August 2003), p. ii.

36. These dates were chosen because these were the years of the Australian census. There
had actually been an increase of 18.7 percent between the 1996 and 2001 census.
37. David Morley reported that in the United Kingdom and France he found "a greater tendency for first–generation immigrant women to be confined to the house, and their consequently less developed skills in the language of their host culture, often leads to them being particularly attracted to satellite broadcasting in their language of cultural origin," from Home Territories (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 168.


43. Ibid., p. 2.

44. The Strategic Plan mentions the importance to "Actively pursue increased educational participation for all our community," Ibid., p. 2.

45. "A profile of Western Australia’s Seniors," Topic Sheet number 4.

46. Win, cited in “A profile of Western Australia’s Seniors,” Topic Sheet number 4.


48. Ibid., p. 2.


53. Wee Keng Neo and Chen Swee Eng referred to this embedding as “a seamless world,” from “Getting it right: Enhancing online learning for higher education using the learning–driven approach,” Singapore Management Review, p. 61.

54. S. Parsons, e–mail interview (3 May 2005).

55. I am using the definition of aging, following on from the work from M. Carolyn Thomas, Virginia Martin, Jeri Jo Alexander, Fannie Cooley and Averil Loague. They stated that older people often are viewed as frail, incompetent, inflexible, wedded to the past, sick, slow, helpless, dependent, depressed, lonely, physically limited, and boring, from “Using new attitudes and technology to change the development counseling focus for older populations,” Counseling and human development, volume 35, number 8 (April 2003), p. 2.


57. Cross, Ibid.

58. Ibid., p. 15.

59. Fox, “Older Americans and the Internet,” p. iii.
From Eleanor Rigby to Nannotet: The greying of the World Wide Web by Tara Brabazon
First Monday, volume 10, number 12 (December 2005),
URL: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue10_12/brabazon/index.html