Article Preview:

Call them "boomers" or "baby boomers." They are the generation born just after the end of World War II (1946) through 1964, the year the Beatles were introduced on the Ed Sullivan Show. This is the Woodstock Generation, the age that marched against the establishment with the hopes of ending the Vietnam War. This defined generation has been seen as the group that would have everything that their parents and grandparents could provide for them. Unfortunately, many of their once-strong nest eggs have shrunk over the past few years because of the financial crisis precipitated by the mortgage collapse of 2008. In general, they are much healthier, better educated, and more financially secure than their parents or grandparents. This also is the "I can do anything" generation. Being a baby boomer myself, I can concur with all that.

At the same time, the nature of what it means to grow older and the definition of what it means to be retired is being changed rapidly by this cohort. This is where libraries can play an essential role as they broaden their senior-based collection beyond traditional large-print books.

Libraries around the country are developing innovative programs to make the retirement years productive, creative, and engaging. These include the Transforming Life After 50 program developed by the California State Library and the Senior Spaces: Pennsylvania Style project developed by Commonwealth Libraries. As these programs are being developed, libraries are faced with building relevant collections that address the myriad informational needs surrounding growing older as a baby boomer.

The RUSA Guidelines for Library and Information Services for Older Adults (2008) suggest some key areas for collection development including: health, health care, social security, financial planning, housing, independent living, elder law, care giving (including grandparenting), lifelong learning (including adult literacy and computer skills), community service, civic engagement, and volunteering. It further states that "the Library's collections, programs, and informational services should reflect the diverse interests and needs of older adults." (1)

This issue of the "The Alert Collector" is designed to assist you in developing and enhancing your physical and virtual library collections to better serve the boomer generation. It also addresses issues of the aging lifespan by including material for the "Silent Generation" and the "Greatest Generation" (the parents and grandparents of the boomers). Marketing your collection can be made easier throughout the year. For example, May is Older Americans Month, September includes National Grandparents Day and November is both Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month and National Family Caregivers Month.

These suggestions are intended for all types of libraries, especially public libraries. Titles of a more scholarly nature on aging, geriatrics, and gerontology haven been intentionally excluded from this collection list. Also not included in this article are titles that were self-published or are available in e-book (e.g., Kindle) editions only.

BUILDING A BASIC COLLECTION

Libraries should begin with an evaluation of which of these key books they already own. These titles are the standards that have been written by well-known authors and should...

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