A program that helps seniors get the hang of current technologies

Many library trainings targeting seniors emphasize basic PC skills, including email and conducting online transactions, while neglecting to teach about social media tools. As a result, internet-savvy seniors that may benefit from social networking and Web 2.0 technology trainings are left with fewer opportunities to participate and join the digital technology discourse.

Libraries are safe places to learn

Libraries should capitalize on the level of trust that they have in the community they serve and include seniors’ programming that prepares them to adapt to new online technologies. A successful combination of traditional and social media features of a library program, offered in a safe and supervised way, could help seniors to adapt to new web 2.0 technologies.

Web 2.0 or User-generated content platforms

As Web 2.0 tools become increasingly embedded in daily life, public librarians are often entrusted to help patrons adapt and navigate these new technologies. Because library book clubs are such a common element of programs at libraries, approaches that integrate user-generated content platforms into book clubs discussions are prone to be successful.

Overview

One of the central challenges of libraries is to figure out how to best integrate information technology developments into their services. One role that librarians currently take is that of helping patrons make sense of the digital world. As such, librarians work towards researching social media resources and services, incorporating social media technologies, and helping information users to understand, and participate more fully in social networking.

To address the learning styles and to meet the needs of internet-savvy seniors, staff at DCPL has created LOL Seniors, a book club for the elderly that incorporates Web 2.0 tools. Through hybrid face-to-face and social media tutorials, technology facilitators help users to add value to the content they are accessing. This ability leads to a seamless exchange of information, building a robust body of knowledge that allows seniors to participate in technology’s collective intelligence.

In the model, discussions on Web 2.0 technologies, social media platforms, and net safety supplement a traditional face-to-face-book club discussions. Instructors maintain their dual role as technology facilitators and book club leaders, and oversee that in-class exercises and take-home assignments support social networking among participants.

What are some of the challenges?

Research identifies physical difficulties, lack of access to computers, skeptical attitudes about the benefits of technology and difficulty learning to use new technologies as challenges that seniors face for embracing technology. This has led some to express that technology for some older demographics is a source of fear and insecurity - a mirror of a generational divide in digital awareness.

What will you need?

Although a Web 2.0 Book Club can be as creative and detailed as resources allow, at a minimum, a successful program will need:

*Instructors competent in social networking *
*A good book *
*Wi-Fi * Public computers with internet access