

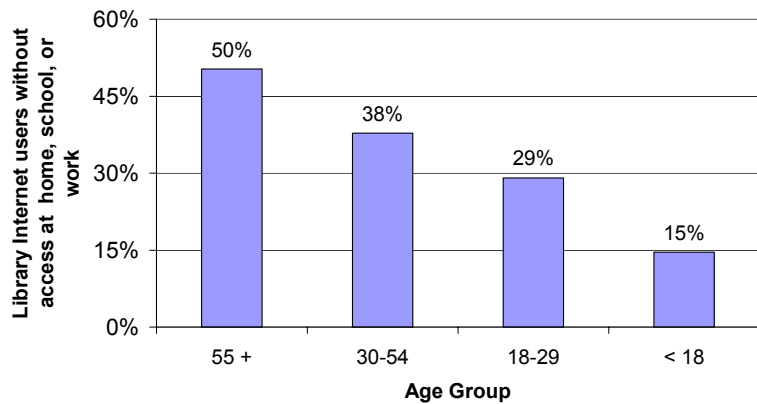
Older Patrons Rely on Internet Access & Technology Assistance Provided by Colorado Public Libraries

Selected Results from Colorado Public Libraries & the Digital Divide, 2002

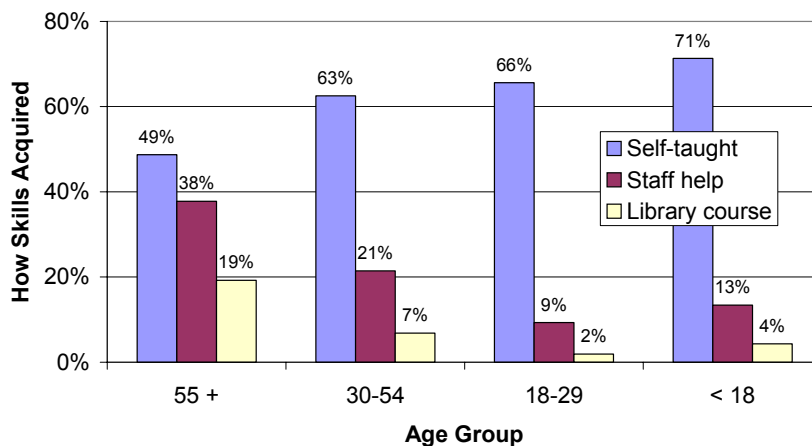
Public libraries are striving to meet the growing technical needs of Colorado pensioners. Providing opportunities for equal participation of all citizens in the information society decreases the disadvantages in day-to-day uses (i.e. online banking, news, government and medical information) that technology "have-nots" face. Sometimes referred to as a "gulf" rather than a "divide" when it comes to residents 55 and older, these seasoned thinkers are taking advantage of equipment and technical support available in public libraries.

- Colorado's older patrons rely on Internet access through public library terminals more than any other age group. Half (50%) of respondents age 55 and older indicated having no other Internet access.
- Over half of the patrons 55 and older (53%) use public library terminals to access the Internet more than once a week.

Library Internet users without access at home, school, or work



How New Technology Skills Acquired in Public Libraries



- People 55 and older are least likely to teach themselves new technology skills at library computers. They are more likely to learn new skills with staff assistance and through library courses than any other age group.

FAST FACTS: Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service
No. 189 – March 5, 2003 (revised October 20, 2004)
Older Patrons Rely on Internet Access & Technology Assistance Provided by Colorado Public Libraries

This might suggest that people over 55, depend on public library technology because of the help available. Lack of technical knowledge and hesitation to utilize new technologies limits the amount of home Internet use for patrons over 55. Older respondents to the Colorado study were less likely to report using the Internet from home, school, or work than other age groups (50% vs. 62-85%). The national study, *A Nation Online: How Americans are Expanding Their Use of the Internet* (2002), indicates that 69% of people age 55 and over have no home Internet access simply because they don't want it.¹ As economic and social opportunities become intertwined with, knowledgeable use of information and technology, teaching and improving technology skills becomes an increasingly vital service provided by Colorado's libraries to older community members.

- More than four out of five older users of library Internet computers indicated visiting the library because of computer availability.

Public Internet access helps older patrons to engage in many online activities. Most frequent uses include searching the web for information on a specific topic (67%) and sending or receiving personal email (56%).

Other activities that increased in correlation with age were activities pertaining to business, consumer matters, and personal finance:

Patrons over the age of 55 indicated using public library terminals to:

- Find health related information for self, friend, or relative. (33% - more than any other group)
- Trade and monitor stocks and investments (18% - nearly twice as likely as any other group)
- Obtain legal documents needed for business purposes (11% - second highest after ages 30 - 54)
- Improve self, family, or friends health (11% - nearly twice as likely as any other group)
- Sell or purchase a home (6% more than any other group)



¹ U.S. Department of Commerce. (2002) *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use Of The Internet*. Washington, D.C

CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE
Tammi Moe, Senior Research Analyst - Library Research Service
201 East Colfax Ave., Suite 309 - Denver, CO 80203-1799
Tel: 303.866.6900 - Fax: 303.866.6940
E-mail: tammi@moe@qwest.net - Web site: www.lrs.org