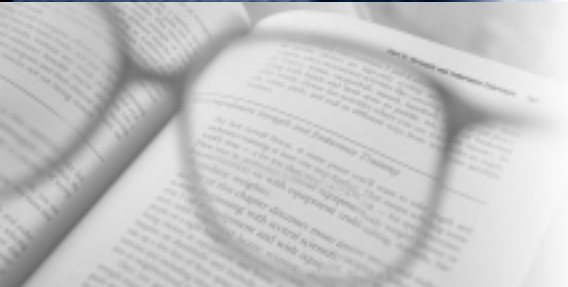




Communicating with Seniors



Advice, Techniques and Tips

Communicating **with** **Seniors**

Advice, Techniques and Tips

*Our mission is to help the people of Canada
maintain and improve their health.*
Health Canada

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Contents

- 1 Message from the Minister of Health**
- 2 Introduction**
- 5 The Senior Audience: Large, Growing, Diverse**
 - 5 The reality check**
 - 7 Seniors are diverse**
 - 7 Changes do come with aging**
 - 9 Literacy and language**
 - 10 How to find out about your audience**
- 12 Choosing the Communication Medium**
 - 12 Defining communication “medium”**
 - 12 Choosing the right medium**
 - 12 Personal communication
 - 17 Meetings
 - 17 Telephone
 - 18 Print
 - 19 Forms
 - 19 Signage
 - 19 Radio
 - 20 Television and video
 - 20 Public address systems
 - 21 Publicity and packaging
 - 22 Automated communication
 - 22 The Internet
 - 23 Friendly is as friendly does**
- 24 Formulating Your Message**
 - 24 Communication concept**
 - 25 Message content**
 - 28 Effective design**
 - 29 Messages are everywhere**

30 The High Road...and the Bottom Line

31 Advice from the Experts — A List of Resources

31 Knowing your audience

32 Language and design

34 Alternative formats

34 Organizations

35 Notes

Checklists and Guidelines

4 *Service*

6 *Attitude*

8 *Sensory changes*

10 *Barriers and solutions*

14 *Aboriginal Peoples*

15 *Professionals*

16 *Meetings*

17 *Telephone*

18 *Plain language*

21 *Packaging and labelling*

26 *Communicating in print*

27 *Promotion and marketing*

28 *Print design*

Message from the Minister of Health

Canada's senior population is among the fastest growing in the world. Seniors currently make up 12% of the citizenry and by 2031, are expected to account for about 22% of the Canadian population. As Canadian society ages, communications, products and services need to adapt. Although some sectors have recognized this reality and are changing their approach, others have not yet assessed their "senior friendliness." Given the importance of information in maintaining overall competence, health and well-being in our complex society, it is clear that communicators in all areas will need to take a closer look at their methods and messages.

This publication is designed as an aid to communicating with seniors. This is not to say that seniors are a homogeneous group – far from it. People are just as diverse in old age as they were in childhood, youth and middle age. But, just as we understand that growing children need care and learning opportunities, just as society makes allowances for adolescents trying to find their way, just as we recognize that adults raising families need parental leave or child care services, so should we be aware of the experience of aging and respond to the changes it brings to seniors' lives.

Striving for communication tools and practices that take seniors into account will improve communication not only with seniors but also with the majority of Canadians, including those who may find themselves marginalized by inadequate access to information because of vision or hearing loss, low literacy skills or restricted mobility.

The aging of the population is creating exciting opportunities for the design of policies, programs, technologies, products and information that will reach all Canadians. The International Year of Older Persons in 1999 provides an occasion to recognize the new demographics and to rethink our communication tools to make sure they meet the needs of Canadian seniors.



Allan Rock



Introduction



What makes communication work? Why do some messages have an impact while others never reach their target? This publication seeks to make communicators in business, government and service agencies aware of the need to factor in the aging of the population when preparing communication strategies.

Communication and information are vitally important to seniors. Growing older is a process of adjustment, and information helps in the transition. Seniors want information about housing, transportation, employment, legal matters and retirement planning. They want to know about health, illness prevention and the effects of medication and nutrition. They're eager for information about programs, services, policies, products as well as leisure, volunteer and cultural activities.

The ways programs, service agencies and businesses choose to communicate with seniors – be they retailers or manufacturers, restaurants or salespeople, banks or insurance companies, television or radio broadcasters, medical service providers or professionals in any field – can have profound implications for all aspects of seniors' lives and well-being. Without effective communication about programs,

products and opportunities, seniors will not be able to gain access to them. Evidence of limited literacy among a significant proportion of current seniors compounds the problem.

Seniors in turn – because of their numbers, purchasing power and amount of discretionary time – can have a significant impact on the success of most businesses and programs.

This publication aims to share what has been learned in the past decade, through research and practical experience, about communicating with seniors. It is divided into four sections:

- **The Senior Audience: Large, Growing, Diverse** looks at what we know about Canadian seniors and how the facts might influence your communication choices;
- **Choosing the Communication Medium** compares communication media – both new and traditional – to explore their suitability for communicating with seniors;
- **Formulating Your Message** offers tips on the content and design of messages, applying what we know about senior audiences and communication media;

■ **Advice from the Experts** is a resource list and bibliography of sources for further information about communicating effectively, especially with older persons.

In short, this guide is about making your communication senior friendly.

In part, this simply means presenting your message in ways that senior audiences will understand and appreciate.

But communication goes well beyond intentional messages. If your public address announcements are unintelligible (think of a crowded airport), if your directional signs are visible only to basketball players, if your services are not accessible to anyone with reduced agility or mobility – what unintentional messages are you communicating to those you serve? Failure to adapt communication for older audiences or to consider whether your business or service is senior friendly has negative effects for you as well as for seniors.

As the Alberta Council on Aging points out in its *Senior Friendly™ Toolkit*, communicating effectively with seniors is based on common sense and courtesy – on considering seniors' needs and respecting seniors' contributions to the community. It's a wise move for business and for society generally

because within the next 30 years or so, one Canadian in four will be a senior. So now is the time to start designing communication media (newspapers, road signs, telephone directories) and environments (housing, public buildings, shopping areas) that recognize that fact.

For government, communicating and serving seniors well means recognizing their contributions and adapting, where necessary, the services and communication about those services to meet the needs of an aging society.

For business, communicating well with seniors means being sensitive to a major consumer market – a large and growing segment with more disposable income, fewer of the financial demands facing younger families, and plenty of leisure time. Services and products that are senior friendly should be publicized and marketed strongly as they are likely to be more user friendly for a great many other Canadians.

For communities, the challenge is to facilitate a continued involvement of seniors, which contributes to their quality of life and health. Not only will seniors' well-being be served, but ours as well, as we continue to benefit from their life

experience, skills and free time. Seniors are already major contributors to volunteer social action.

Reaching out to senior hands, hearts and minds will further strengthen the sense of belonging and mutual respect that always benefits communities.

In the end, senior friendly communication is likely to be *universally* friendly. There is no fixed line between a “young” audience and an “old” audience – and no solid

boundary between communication “for seniors” and communication for everyone else. When information is easy to see, easy to hear and easy to understand, everyone benefits.

When services and facilities are accessible, safe and well designed, everyone can use them in comfort and security. And when staff are trained to deal sensitively and respectfully with clients and customers, service improves for everyone.

Serving Seniors Well

- ✓ Do you have a policy or guidelines for serving older clients?
- ✓ Do your frontline and customer service staff have specific training in how to serve older customers?
- ✓ Do staff allow extra time and care in dealing with senior clients, without rushing to complete the sale, transaction, interview or medical visit?
- ✓ Does your business or office offer comfortable seating?
- ✓ Do your stationery or forms use easily understood terms and large characters?
- ✓ If you have automated services such as bank machines or government kiosks, are the screens universal (adjustable for people of varying heights and eyesight)? Are buttons and lettering large and easy to read?

The Senior Audience: Large, Growing, Diverse



Canada's senior population (over 65) has grown more than twice as fast as the overall population since the early 1980s, and the trend will continue for decades to come. Understanding the effects of the aging process, as well as the diversity of seniors, is key to communicating effectively with this growing segment of the Canadian population.

The reality check

Who makes up the senior audience? Are your perceptions about older Canadians valid and up-to-date? Or have you fallen for some of the many myths about seniors and aging? Grasping the facts about Canadian seniors is a starting point for examining communication strategies to reach this large and growing audience.

Are you aware of its major characteristics?

- About one third of Canadian seniors live in rural areas and small towns, the rest in urban areas.¹
- 93% of seniors live in private households – 58% with a spouse or partner, 7% with a family member, 29% alone, 2% with non-relatives.²
- 57% of Canadians over 65 and 70% of Canadians over 85 are women.²
- 75% of men and 43% of women age 65+ are married.²
- About 20% of current Canadians age 65+ have a post-secondary diploma or degree, while 60% did not complete high school. Of the latter, 37% have less than a Grade 9 education.²
- A considerable number of current seniors have some level of difficulty with reading.³
- Senior households spent a total of \$69 billion in 1996.⁴
- Seniors have more leisure time and disposable income than members of other age groups.¹
- Over one fifth of households headed by a senior report gifts and donations of more than 10% of after-tax income. Seniors also give generously of their time.⁴
- An estimated 46% of seniors have a disability and for the most part they continue to enjoy an active lifestyle in their communities.⁵
- 75% of seniors aged 65 to 74 rate their health as good, very good or excellent, as do 66% of those aged 75+.⁴
- Half of seniors report physical activity of 15 minutes or more at least 12 times per

month. The most popular activities: walking, gardening, home exercise, swimming, dancing.⁴

- Almost two thirds of those aged 80+ report needing no help with daily tasks such as grocery shopping and meal preparation, housework and personal care.⁴
- About 20% are immigrants or the children of immigrants, and some 6% belong to a so-called “visible minority.”⁴
- In 1997, about 13% of families headed by someone aged 65 or older had a home computer.⁶

While these facts suggest exciting opportunities for restaurants, bookstores, gardening suppliers, performing arts

organizations, adult education providers, the travel industry, financial planners and investment brokers, personalized home assistance and repair services, and many other businesses and services, they also imply certain responsibilities and approaches. Reaching the vibrant and expanding segment of the Canadian population requires effective communication at all levels.

Not only do communicators need to develop new attitudes and more sensitive materials and services, they must also keep abreast of the evolution of that market as new and different generations will reach the “golden years” over the next few decades.

Your attitude is showing!

- Avoid stereotyping or reinforcing incorrect perceptions about seniors – show older people as you know them to be: active participants, using a full range of abilities in a full range of roles and activities.
- Shun ageism, racism and sexism in conversation, text, illustrations and photographs. They are prohibited by law.
- Especially avoid ageist language (that categorizes seniors negatively), such as “the aged,” “the elderly,” oldsters, senile, feeble, etc.
- Use “seniors,” “older persons” or “older adults” if you need to indicate the age group.
- Beware of patronizing, condescending or childish expressions and tone when talking with or about seniors.
- Keep in mind that seniors are generally wise shoppers whose lifelong experience comes in handy in detecting flattery and insincere deference.
- Remember that the way you use language reflects your attitudes and your respect for the audience.

Seniors are diverse

People's choices about where they obtain services or prefer to shop are influenced by their level of education, their age, their living arrangements and their cultural background, as well as their capacities and interests. With such diversity, it follows that older Canadians want to be able to choose from a range of information sources about businesses, services and government programs. Studies of seniors' information preferences and habits will help you pinpoint the medium best suited to the audience segment you want to reach.⁷

The varying life experiences and personal characteristics of seniors means that they also hold a range of values, beliefs and opinions. The world view of someone who grew up or started raising a family during the Depression is bound to be different from that of someone raised in the 1950s or of the "babyboomers." Access to education has also varied greatly in this century. Place of residence (urban or rural), socio-economic status, national origin or ethnicity, and gender all contribute to the diversity of the senior population.

Tailoring messages for a senior audience therefore means recognizing that seniors may hold different views – different from each other and from you – about these and other issues:

- what constitutes "the good life," "quality," and "service"
- attitudes toward authority or bureaucracy

- degree of comfort in asking someone else for help
- perceptions of health and illness
- attitudes toward disability
- ideas about food and nutrition
- concepts of age and aging
- male/female roles
- family and intergenerational relationships
- what government is and what it does or should do
- what health and social services are and how they work

Changes do come with aging

Although diversity is a hallmark of the senior population, some changes do accompany aging, and even healthy seniors experience losses that can affect their access, level of interest and/or capacity to receive and understand information. Do your communications with and for seniors take these changes into account?

- **Sensory changes** are a normal part of aging. Changes in visual and hearing acuity can affect an older person's capacity to absorb information. Changes are seldom abrupt and may be barely noticeable at first. A person may begin to have difficulty hearing clearly if a sound is above or below a certain pitch or if there is background noise. The capacity to see clearly in low light or shadows may decline, or susceptibility to glare may increase.

Aging and Communication

Sensory change

Types of communication affected

Visual acuity

- product labelling
- signage: public buildings, street signs
- banking machines (glare on screens)
- information available only in print
- televised information
- glossy paper and colour brochures

Hearing acuity

- interpersonal communication
- public address systems
- telephone
- television and radio

Agility and mobility

- pushbutton telephone
- banking machines
- kits (to be assembled)
- product packages
- opportunities to see billboards, public transit ads, etc.

Social/emotional changes

- more emphasis on personal contact and other information dissemination methods to overcome isolation (e.g. through clubs, church, seniors' centres)

■ **Physical changes** include declines in flexibility, strength, speed of execution, fine motor control and hand-eye coordination, which can translate into difficulty manipulating controls and small objects (touchtone telephone buttons, automated banking machines and direct payment keypads, coin-operated devices, household appliances). Diseases such as arthritis, rheumatism and osteoporosis can also affect agility and mobility.

■ **Changes in cognitive function**, including memory, reasoning and abstract thinking, affect a very small percentage of younger seniors, although the percentage does rise with age. In general, sharp brains tend to stay sharp; cognitive processing may take a little longer, but this is normal aging, not a sign of "senility." Skilful communication (repeating key points in various ways, checking for understanding) can help overcome this.

- The **social changes** surrounding aging include changes in income and earning capacity, loss of social networks through retirement and the death of spouse and/or friends, society’s “isolating” attitude toward seniors, the potential for reduced access to transportation and hence to recreational and social activities, and changes in living arrangements.
- Finally, aging can bring **emotional changes**, many of them arising from sensory, physical and social changes. They include loneliness, isolation, tension or worry, anxiety about becoming dependent on others, and fears about safety, security and loss of access to activities or services enjoyed when younger.

Literacy and language

Literacy – the ability to absorb and understand written information and to act on this knowledge – is an inescapable consideration when you’re planning to communicate with seniors.

Low literacy skills have obvious implications for seniors’ health, safety, consumer choices, social connections, and awareness of programs and services. It also has an impact on the effectiveness of all communication media relying on the written word.

While it is estimated that around 48% of Canadians have some degree of difficulty with reading, surveys indicate that as many as 80% of Canadian seniors currently over 65 may have reading problems significant enough to interfere with tasks such as filling out forms or reading instructions on medicine containers (document

literacy), understanding information provided by government and other institutions (prose literacy) or doing basic arithmetic (quantitative literacy) such as balancing a chequebook, calculating a tip or completing an order form.⁸

With less access to education earlier this century, many older adults did not gain the skills and knowledge needed to use printed material effectively. They may have coped over the years by emphasizing oral communication, developing strong memory skills, and turning to a relative or friend to interpret written material. But aging may eventually undermine their ability to rely on these strategies, making it more and more difficult to acquire vital information about health, safety and financial security if it is available only from printed sources.³

In addition, seniors may be literate in their mother tongue but not in English or French, or may come from cultures with environments, outlooks, traditions and religious beliefs that remove them from many aspects of Canadian society – including technological changes, health, social and transportation services, educational structure, occupational options, perceptions of health and illness, and options in living arrangements. Communicators should never equate limited literacy with a limited capacity to understand. Plain language and culturally sensitive choices of medium and message can help to overcome these barriers to effective communication and help you reach a much larger audience.

Barriers and Solutions

Potential barriers to communication

Possible solutions

Outdated assumptions about seniors' lifestyles, interests, capacities

- stay in touch through research, focus groups, talking to your clients and customers
- establish partnerships with seniors' groups

Physical changes of aging

- explore alternative formats and communication methods (large print, audio and video cassette, personal contact, assistive listening devices)

Communication materials and media not suited to audience

- use advisory committees to guide development of materials
- test materials before use
- link with specialized agencies such as Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, literacy organizations...

How to find out about your audience

Keeping up with the personal profile of your audience means tapping many sources of knowledge about seniors.

The federal government and each provincial/territorial government has at least one agency devoted to seniors' issues and concerns. Many of them publish reports, newsletters and other material to help you keep your knowledge current. Libraries and online research will reveal these information sources and many more. (See the resources at the end of the publication.) Statistics Canada is an excellent source of information about the number and proportion of seniors in your community and

their personal characteristics, including cultural background and mother tongue, education and income levels.

Seniors' organizations and groups serving seniors (at the local, provincial/territorial and national levels) are another valuable source of information by and about seniors. Who better to tell you about the audience you want to reach than seniors themselves?

Many professional organizations (doctors, nurses, social workers, long-term care workers, pharmacists, opticians, dietitians, lawyers) and specialized agencies (CNIB, etc.) publish information to help their members serve an older clientele.

You can also conduct research yourself. For example:

- Appoint an advisory committee of clients, customers or members of your target audience before beginning to develop a new communication approach or information product. This technique can work equally well for health and social services providers or for associations of merchants, restaurants or shopping mall tenants.
- Test a communication approach or information product with a focus group of seniors. A local seniors' centre or advocacy group could help.
- The same seniors' centre or advocacy group might agree to conduct a "senior friendliness" assessment of your facilities, business or service. Or conduct your own, using the *Senior Friendly™ Toolkit* from the Alberta Council on Aging (see the resource list.)

- Survey current customers or clients to see how successful you've been in communicating. Ask them for suggestions about their preferred method of receiving information, how you could improve your materials, and what changes would help make your facilities or services more senior friendly.

The cost of these audience research and testing techniques could save you from costly mistakes in the design of your message or the choice of medium – with implications for your bottom line, whether you're striving for commercial success or running a public sector agency trying to do more with less.



Choosing the Communication Medium



Reaching a wider audience, including seniors, means thinking broadly about what constitutes communication and how best to communicate. A first step is to define the means or “medium” you use to reach senior clients and customers.

Defining communication “medium”

When developing communications to include a senior audience, think broadly about all the potential vehicles and means of communication. Businesses, financial institutions and governments may think they communicate largely through advertising and written information. But they also communicate each time they answer the telephone, greet clients at an office, branch or store, or broadcast over a public address system.

***Example:** In a medical clinic, pay attention not only to written or illustrative material handed out during a visit, but also to the telephone answering system, the directional signage, the comfort of the seating, the acoustics of the waiting room, and the interpersonal listening and communication skills of doctors, nurses and reception staff.⁹*

***Example:** To announce a change in a government program or service, mass media advertising, widely distributed pamphlets or brochures, or cheque or utility bill inserts might reach a sizeable proportion of seniors. But think also about communication directed to older persons who don't read a newspaper regularly and don't choose print as their principal information source.*

Choosing the right medium

The medium should suit not only the audience but also the nature of the message. Media are not created equal, and research shows that success in reaching target audiences and implanting messages effectively varies widely.

Personal communication

Face-to-face or telephone contact is often the first and sometimes the only communication between seniors and health and social services professionals. This contact can have far-reaching consequences on health, and is especially critical for people with low literacy. Some research has suggested that personal contact is seniors' preferred source of health information, even for skilled readers,¹⁰ and this finding could well extend to any type of information with the potential to affect seniors' well-being and quality of life, such as

information about pensions and other entitlements, investment options, and travel and recreation opportunities.

Personal communication is also important for customer relations and client service staff in large corporations, retail stores and service businesses. For these organizations, that first contact may mean the difference between a sale or a lost customer. The bibliography at the end of this publication offers valuable sources for providing quality verbal contact and information. Several of the boxes also offer tips and checklists for anyone serving a senior clientele.

In some circumstances, communicating through people that seniors trust and pay attention to (they are sometimes referred to as “key informants”) may be more effective than formal communication techniques. Research has found that when older people need help with a problem, they often turn to informal information networks such as family members and trusted friends and neighbours. Researchers speculate that reluctance to use formal sources to find needed information or services may relate to communication barriers like these:

- frustration using an automated telephone system,
- difficulty hearing over the telephone,
- the impersonal nature of dealing with someone over the telephone, particularly if required to give personal information, and
- difficulties interpreting printed material that might be offered through formal sources.¹¹

Many Aboriginal cultures (Inuit, Métis and First Nations) are based on an oral tradition. Aboriginal seniors have told researchers that their preferred information source is word of mouth. In many Aboriginal communities, therefore, print is the least effective means of reaching a senior (or any other) audience. Instead, methods that emphasize personal contact, social connections, and oral transmission of information are preferred.

Communicating with Aboriginal Seniors

The principle

Best practices

Multi-level communications approach

- identify preferred methods of sharing information
- consider word of mouth, radio/CB, newsletters, audio and video tape

Personal contact

- find ways to establish and maintain personal contact with seniors and/or family members to share and discuss information
- community information dinners

Community support

- seek help of seniors and community helpers (possibly an advisory committee) to determine best local techniques for reaching seniors
- design and pilot test new methods if necessary
- maintain contact with community groups to stay current and follow up

Language accessibility

- local languages as appropriate for oral and written communication

Minimize print use

- video presentations
- announcements on Aboriginal radio
- plain language where print used
- flyers and posters for simplicity
- graphics to explain/expand on print message

The best way to communicate varies from one community to another – because trusted information sources and channels of communication vary from one to the next – but the experience of various communities across the country has demonstrated the value of some methods.¹²

The message from Aboriginal communities is clear, and it applies equally well to many other groups of seniors (like those with limited vision or hearing); no single medium or information distribution strategy works in every situation. Communicators must be prepared to consider a range of methods if they want to reach all senior audience members.

✓ Checklist for Professionals

Verbal communication

Ask the person to list questions or concerns before an office visit

Ask the person how they prefer you to address them (Mrs., first name...)

Use open-ended questions to elicit information

Summarize information provided by the client to check your comprehension or the facts

Avoid formality and professional jargon; speak to the person's level of vocabulary and understanding

Offer checklists or other plain-language material to back up oral instructions

Make sure your client has understood you by asking that he/she resume what was said

If the client doesn't understand, rephrase the sentence; don't just repeat the same words or say them louder.

Non-verbal communication

Avoid establishing physical barriers (across desk) between you and the client

Remain seated during the conversation

Show courteous attention; demonstrate interest in what they're saying

Show (don't just tell) the client how to do something

Maintain eye contact; communicate occasionally through touch if appropriate

Avoid doodling or fiddling

Stay alert to non-verbal clues that contradict or supplement verbal communication

Stay focused on the client; don't consult your schedule or watch

Interpersonal communication should also be a two-way street – not just a way to distribute information but also a means of checking for comprehension and letting clients clarify or enhance their understanding. Medical, legal, counselling and other professionals in particular need to be skilled in responsive listening.

Communicating with seniors is not simply a matter of conveying your own messages.

It should involve an exchange of information, allowing clients or customers to express thoughts and feelings as well as convey objective information about their situation. The listener must be skilled in interpreting gestures, words and behaviour, observing verbal and non-verbal messages, allowing enough time for communication to occur, and providing the appropriate responses.¹³

✓ Checklist for Planning a Meeting

- ✓ The invitation to the meeting should give a contact name for notifying of any particular needs or aids.

- ✓ The meeting location should be accessible – close to public transportation, offering a place where seniors can be dropped off safely by car, and plenty of parking, preferably free.

- ✓ The meeting room should be accessible to people with varying degrees of mobility; the meeting room chairs should be comfortable.

- ✓ Arrange the room to ensure that everyone can see and/or hear and understand your message. The requirements will vary with the audience and could include public address systems that accommodate assistive listening devices and hearing aids, sign language interpretation, large posters or projected images to convey key points. But beware of projection methods that require a darkened room (difficult for low vision).

- ✓ Always start the meeting at the appointed time.

- ✓ Make sure the first speaker announces who is at the head table and asks speakers or persons asking questions to identify themselves. This is particularly useful to people who are blind or otherwise not able to read name tags/plates.

- ✓ It is also helpful to announce the location of washrooms and other amenities like coffee shops. If there are refreshments available, announce the location and the choices.

- ✓ Messages should be simple and concise: narrow them down to three or four points – no one can retain more than that, senior or not so senior. Hand-outs can reinforce and supplement the information.

- ✓ Allow time for questions and clarification.

- ✓ Schedule a few minutes of wrap-up at the end of the gathering to repeat and reinforce key messages.

- ✓ Offer plain-language hand-outs and a telephone number (answered by a real person) for questions that remain unanswered.

- ✓ Finally, plan to end the gathering on time, so that people using public transit or arranged rides can get home safely and conveniently.

Meetings

If arranged with thought and care, meetings and similar gatherings can be a practical way to convey information to groups of seniors – for example, at a seniors' centre or in an apartment building with a large senior population. As we have seen, this may be the most appropriate medium for reaching some groups of seniors, because of its emphasis on exchanging information orally and in a social setting. A meeting also offers the opportunity for seniors to compare notes later with others who were present to confirm or clarify the information they took in.

Telephone

Use of the telephone to find and convey information is a highly personal choice. Many seniors find the telephone essential for staying in touch with family and

friends and maintaining social networks. But many also find it less satisfactory as a means of obtaining information if they can't speak to a real person or can do so only after negotiating an automated answering system. In addition, some seniors have problems using the telephone because of hearing loss.

This raises serious considerations about whether the telephone is an appropriate choice for communicating with a senior audience and, once chosen, about the design of a system intended to serve senior users. A toll-free number as a source of information about government programs or services may not be effective, for example, if it connects to a pushbutton-activated voice message system that does not accommodate callers with rotary phones or those who prefer to speak to a real person.

✓ Telephone System Checklist

- ✓ Does your phone system invite callers to talk to a real person without waiting for endless messages and menu choices?

- ✓ Does the system accommodate rotary phones?

- ✓ Are the instructions on your automated answering system spoken clearly and slowly, with options to repeat a menu?

- ✓ Does your message start by advising callers to have a pen and paper handy?

- ✓ Does your system provide for tty/teletypewriter users, to accommodate callers who are deaf or hard of hearing?

- ✓ Does the system give callers the option of leaving a message and having someone return the call?

✓ Plain Language Checklist

- ✓ Use familiar words and a conversational, personal tone.
- ✓ Proceed logically, with the most important ideas first, and linked from one paragraph to the next.
- ✓ Use action verbs and active construction, not passive.
- ✓ Favour short words and short sentences.
- ✓ Use short paragraphs.
- ✓ Use concrete examples to illustrate ideas or concepts.
- ✓ Present ideas with illustrations or diagrams if this makes them easier to understand.
- ✓ Highlight main ideas and important information with headings, point form and boldface type.

Print

Print has the advantages of allowing skilled readers to absorb information at their own pace and to retain the item for future reference. Print can also be tailored for an audience with more limited literacy skills through plain language, design and message development. Keep in mind that any attempt at simplifying the task (large letters, simple words, etc.) will make your message available to a wider audience. Your print material must invite readers to *begin* reading, and your writing must make it easy for them to get your message.¹⁴ The next box offers basic advice in the use of plain language to reach the largest possible audience with printed materials; the next chapter contains more detailed information on writing techniques.

As we have seen, however, written material – even plain-language material designed for maximum readability – is not always seniors' preferred information source. Moreover, written material may be of limited use to reach people with low literacy skills or limited vision, or to communicate with members of cultural communities who are literate in a mother tongue but not in English or French. Before printing leaflets, placing notices or advertising in newspapers and magazines, consider your audience and whether this method is likely to reach it.

Finally, if print documents are the chosen medium for your message, consider conveying the information in large print (see section on design) or in alternative formats – braille, audio or video cassettes, computer diskette. Providing information in print alone means you may miss large segments of your target audience.

Forms

Forms are another type of written communication widely used in our society. Many large organizations – governments, health care facilities, financial institutions, insurance companies – use forms to communicate and exchange information with clients and customers. Forms filled out incorrectly or incompletely can significantly affect a senior's health care, entitlement to social benefits, or financial security. Correction of these errors is also a source of huge human resource costs for business and government – extra time spent answering phone calls from confused customers, postage and effort returning incomplete forms for more information, wasted forms discarded because of mistakes, and additional time and cost to process long, complex forms.

Forms therefore require careful design to ensure that they capture the necessary data and convey vital information to intended users. If you use forms and serve a senior clientele, *Creating Plain Language Forms for Seniors* can be a valuable resource (see details in bibliography.) The guide points out that effective use of forms involves plain language and design, as well as strategies for getting them filled out by

seniors with low literacy skills, such as help from a staff member, peer volunteer or family member.¹⁵

Signage

“Public” print – direction, street and warning signs, video displays giving schedules and other information, transit ads, and so on – also requires careful attention to design. Their size and location, the colour and size of type used, the colour of the background and the contrast between print and background, and the potential for glare from nearby light sources can affect their ability to communicate clearly with seniors and others with low or declining vision.¹⁶ Also, some colour combinations (for example, the commonly used red on black) do not provide enough contrast to be legible by people with low vision.

Radio

Surveys on seniors' preferred methods of receiving information show that radio is not high on the list for most. Radio is a fast-paced medium, where listeners generally have to acquire information at the pace set by the broadcast. But radio could be effective in reaching parts of the older population, some of whom are devoted radio listeners. This is especially true if declining visual acuity has reduced the appeal of print and television as means of staying abreast of current and community affairs.

A radio message must be designed carefully, bearing in mind that the older person's ability to hear and understand the message is affected by the pitch of an announcer's voice, the speed at which the message is delivered, and the presence of background sound, which can interfere with receipt of the main message.

Seniors' radio listening (and television watching) habits are charted by the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement, among other organizations. Their published surveys can help you determine whether the audience you're trying to reach is likely to be listening or watching at any given time.

Television and video

Some seniors watch a lot of television, but messages may not always be effective because this medium doesn't allow viewers to set the pace at which they acquire information. This is important in terms of the capacity to absorb information and retain it for future reference, which a fast-moving 30- or 60-second television announcement cannot promote very effectively. Special care must be taken in designing television messages for seniors.

Television in the form of community-run cable stations or community access programs may be useful in reaching specific audience segments, such as members of ethno-cultural communities or Aboriginal people. Some specialty channels (those with travel and nature themes, for example) have also been shown to be of particular interest to seniors. Wise use of community programming could help

overcome some of the language and literacy barriers to communication.

Videotape can also be used as an alternative form of communication, and it must be as carefully designed as a radio or television broadcast or a public address announcement, with deliberate attention to the types of voices used, the speed of message delivery, repetition of key points, avoidance of background noise, and use of graphics and action sequences to "show" viewers instead of "telling" them what you want them to know.

If you choose television or videotape to convey your message, use captioning (open or closed) to reach an additional audience that might otherwise be excluded.

Public address systems

Airports, bus and train stations, hospitals, shopping malls – all use public address (PA) systems to inform visitors, and some have audio/visual displays as well. They do not always communicate effectively with seniors if background noise interferes with the ability to hear or understand the message, or if announcers speak too fast or don't speak clearly. The softer consonants – s, f – can be particularly confusing for someone with reduced hearing if words are not pronounced distinctly. Using a hearing aid may not help with receipt of PA announcements.

Public audio/visual displays should also be designed carefully to ensure that messages are clear, are repeated often enough, do not scroll by too quickly, and follow the other standards that enhance comprehension.

Example: *The Vancouver International Airport has specially tailored PA system and flight information displays equipped with telephone access for those who can't read the displays. PA speakers are installed at 15-foot intervals, so that announcements can be broadcast at lower volume – more speakers at lower volume makes the message more intelligible. In some areas, announcements are presented visually on a board or video display. Check-in counters are also equipped with telephone handsets to amplify conversations between passengers and counter staff.*

Designing universally friendly PA systems also means supplementing them with clear signs and other visual cues to help visitors navigate through the facility and find an information kiosk quickly and easily. The issue is not only conveying information, but also assuring safety and security.¹⁷

Publicity and packaging

Applying effective communication principles to the way products and services are advertised and packaged is a vast field of its own. The advertiser's knowledge of the audience and empathy toward older customers can spell the difference between a marketing triumph and a flop. If we are to be sensitive to the needs of seniors, consideration should be given to offering products in non child-proof packaging (clearly labelled as such and with a warning to

✓ Packaging and Labelling Checklist

- ✓ Does your company have a clear policy of designing and using packaging that takes into account the needs and characteristics of older consumers?

- ✓ Are there clear instructions to explain the product's use, including large print and illustrations?

- ✓ Do the instructions include safety and hazard warnings?

- ✓ Are labels, instructions and warnings written in non-technical language?

- ✓ Have you focus-tested the labelling and instructions with senior consumers?

- ✓ Is packaging easy to open, not demanding extra strength or dexterity?

- ✓ Are packaging, labelling and instructions printed in at least 12-point type with sharp contrast between background and foreground (at least a 70% difference)?

keep out of the reach of children). A 1993 survey demonstrated that a good number of seniors (26% of those over 75) ceased to purchase a product whose packaging was difficult to open. As the senior population grows and businesses become increasingly aware of its needs and its tremendous consumer purchasing power, custom-crafted packaging and advertising strategies will be essential for commercial survival.¹⁸ (For more on promotion and marketing, see the next chapter, *Formulating Your Message*.)

Automated communication

The design of bank machines and other automated services (such as museum displays and government kiosks dispensing information and licence renewals) should take into account the sensory, mobility and agility changes associated with aging. Design considerations include not only physical specifications (height, glare reduction on screens, size of buttons and screen messages), but also the communication or interaction between the customer/ client and the machine, such as the vocabulary used in visual or oral messages and the length of time needed to grasp the message and to react by pushing the appropriate button.

Example: One bank has introduced audio banking at some locations – banking machines equipped with headphones for use by clients with low vision, and standards are being developed for more accessible machines to accommodate all types of disabilities (lower height, adjustable screens, larger buttons, etc.).

The Internet

The Internet can be a very effective way to reach a small (though growing) segment of the senior population. Computer courses for seniors are very popular and there can be no doubt that Internet use will expand with every new generation of seniors.

Web site design and online documentation present many of the same challenges as print and other media, such as telephone answering systems. The design guidelines that apply to print – type sizes, contrast between type and background, avoidance of dots and wavy lines – also apply to web site and online documentation. As well, avoiding unnecessarily complex web site structures makes just as much sense in cyberspace as it does for publications and automated telephone answering systems. In fact, senior friendly design makes surfing the web more enjoyable and informative for all users, not just seniors. Microsoft has recently prepared excellent Web design guidelines to facilitate access and readability for seniors¹⁹.

Friendly is as friendly does

Simply proclaiming your senior friendliness won't gain you much ground – seniors will soon detect whether your intentions are genuine. As one observer explains, seniors are a sceptical bunch, they're suspicious of flattery and insincere deference, and most can smell a huckster a mile away.²⁰ Becoming senior friendly is a matter of conscious decisions and choices about when, how and where to communicate.

Example: *A bank branch has hired a senior a few mornings a week to help familiarize other seniors with its services or to introduce them to an automated service. Coffee and snacks are served. Seating is comfortable. Senior customers can also make an appointment with this peer trainer for a personalized session on how to use the bank machine.*

Example: *A restaurant reserves the most accessible tables for seniors – close to the entrance or on an obstacle-free route from the door, away from drafts and traffic paths, and close to a good light source. Seniors have multiple menu (large print with photos) choices: they can enjoy the “early bird special,” take advantage of the seniors’ discount on a smaller-portion regular menu, or pay full price and take home the leftovers. Serving staff take a half-day awareness session, arranged by the local seniors’ centre, on serving older customers. In exchange, the restaurant offers meal coupons that the centre can use as raffle or door prizes.*

These and many other businesses are “walking the talk” – demonstrating through their actions that seniors’ comfort and safety, their likes and dislikes, are important to them. Their success is showing up in better client satisfaction and a healthier bottom line.





Formulating Your Message

You have two choices when it comes to communicating with the members of the senior audience you want to reach:

- You could single out these clients or customers and give them information designed specifically to meet their needs and expectations, *or*
- You could adopt a new approach in dealing with *all* customers and clients, making sure that your communication is always clear and universally accessible and checking regularly to make sure your messages have been received and understood.

The second approach may well be more effective, because adapting a message or medium for a senior audience helps everyone get more from it! What's more, in thinking about whether to single out older people with "special" information products and communication approaches, consider the risks of alienating clients or customers by creating stigma, embarrassment or shame.

You've done your research to find out about your audience and their preferred information sources. You've thought about the potential of the various media to reach your audience. Now you have to think about formulating a message to suit both the audi-

ence and the communication medium. Formulating the message means making decisions about *concept*, *content* and *design*.

Communication concept

Choosing a concept means selecting the appropriate medium for communicating with your audience, fashioning a message that is well suited to that medium, and structuring the message to ensure that it can be communicated effectively. It means asking yourself (and possibly your senior advisory panel) questions like these:

- Is this the most suitable way of communicating this particular message to this particular audience?
- How can we structure the message and use the medium in ways our audience will appreciate and be receptive to?
- What are the characteristics of this medium that we can take advantage of to make sure our message comes across effectively?

Thinking about concept also means thinking about the accessibility of your message. Does the concept you've chosen accommodate large print? Will it also work well in alternative formats, such as audio or video cassette, braille and computer diskette? Will the design accommodate a print-reading machine? Tables, boxes and the

A communication concept does not need to be complex or fancy to be effective

- a bookmark with library hours printed in large type
- a fridge magnet with emergency numbers
- a pre-printed grocery list designed to emphasize nutrition guidelines
- peel-off stickers to be placed on a calendar as memory joggers
- simple clock and calendar outlines as reminders for appointments and medication schedules

dots between text and page number in a table of contents can be barriers to information for people using these machines.

Also bear in mind that if communicating in “plain language” is one of your goals (and in most cases it should be), you also need a plain concept supported by a plain structure.²¹ Plain language is hard to impose retroactively. If you start with a complex message, it may be difficult if not impossible to convert or translate it into plain language after the fact.

Finally, remember that your concept can convey just as much as your actual words. As the checklists throughout this publication show, inattention to the details of how your message is presented can send the wrong messages about your knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about older Canadians.

Message content

Deciding on the content of your message is sometimes the most difficult part of communicating. Assuming that you know the members of your audience well, the next step may be to put yourself in their shoes:

- What does the audience want to know?
- What does the audience already know, and how much more does it need to know?
- Should we try to meet all these information needs with this particular vehicle, or should we be selective about the information and messages we choose to convey?

The journalistic technique is to ask the questions that your audience is most likely to want answered and then to gather the information needed to formulate answers to those questions – the message practically writes itself!

In choosing message content, the most common advice is to keep it simple. Don't try to force too much information into a single communication vehicle or opportunity. You end up confusing readers or producing something that does only half a job. Too much information is sometimes worse than too little. Seniors with low literacy skills can be intimidated by a “wall of words.” Always provide a phone number or address so that the audience can get more information or ask questions.

Remember that “writing” applies to all forms of communication, not just print. Whether communication takes the form of

To communicate effectively in print

- **Attract the reader** – with a catchy title and pleasant concept.
- **Banish small print** – it's the number one complaint of seniors and aging baby boomers (see print design guidelines in next section).
- **Read it out loud** – if you have to pause for a breath in the middle of a sentence, it's too long. You're making your reader work too hard to find your point.
- **Tell 'em whodunit** – let readers know right away who's doing what. Use active instead of passive language. ("Ask your doctor for instructions" *instead of* "This medication is to be taken under the instruction of a physician.")
- **Find the right tone** – be friendly, direct, inclusive. Write the way you speak. Put yourself in your reader's shoes. Watch out for bureaucratic or patronizing language.
- **Check jargon at the door** – show respect for your readers and your message by expressing it in words everyone can understand. Jargon, abbreviations and acronyms have no place in universally friendly materials.

(Adapted from Sally McBeth, "Clear Language and Design", Ontario Health Promotion E-Mail Bulletin #43 (Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse: February 1998))

a pamphlet, a web site, a radio spot, a public address announcement, a bookmark, or an automated voice answering system, content always has to be written, and the first step in writing is thinking about your audience and what the message should convey.

Other aspects of content also have an impact on advertising and marketing campaigns, among them the image you project of your business and of the senior clients who are the intended consumers of your product or service. The following checklist provides basic questions that a promotion or marketing campaign should address.

Other content issues include:

- **Style** – Formal or informal? Conversational or more reserved? Is humour appropriate? Humour can be a stress reducer, helping people relax and register important information. But don't be patronizing or assume familiarity. The style you adopt should suit the message, the audience, your organization and the medium.
- **Vocabulary** – Again, vocabulary should match the message and the audience. For almost all situations, short, simple, familiar words are best – see checklists

✓ Promotion and Marketing Checklist

- ✓ Have you researched and produced guidelines about tailoring messages for older consumers?

- ✓ Do you focus-test your materials with senior customers or clients?

- ✓ Does your marketing plan recognize that you are not trying to communicate with a single homogeneous group of clients or customers?

- ✓ Have you tested a marketing plan and materials with several groups of older consumers that include a range of ages and literacy levels?

- ✓ Do you use older persons or models in your promotional materials?

- ✓ Do you present positive images of people who are healthy, happy and representative of seniors' diversity of culture, language, health status, geographic location, income level and so on?

for tips. Avoid professional, technical, academic and other jargon and unfamiliar acronyms and abbreviations.

- **Language level** – Remember that 48% of Canadians experience significant difficulties with reading²² and that the percentage is much higher among seniors and those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. Readability tests have been developed to determine the grade level of a text, but testing the message with your audience is always the best indicator of reader friendliness. Contact literacy groups in your area (check the Yellow Pages under *Literacy* or *Learners*) to obtain feedback about the readability of your material.
- **Presentation** – The way you organize and present information says you've given some thought to the best way to convey a message to your audience. Page

after page of densely packed type – even if it is written plainly and clearly – may not be as effective as a pamphlet with big bold headings and checklists highlighting or recapping key information (more on this in the next section).

- **Structure** – A simple structure supports a simple message. This makes for good writing in print, but also good communication in other media. If you've ever tried to navigate a multi-layered web site or an automated answering system where the menu choices go on and on, you'll know that simple structure usually makes for more effective communication.
- **Testing** – This is the best way to see whether you've hit the mark in terms of language, style, presentation and overall effectiveness. Real users, ideally members of your intended audience, are the best judges, and materials should be tested in

real-life situations that replicate when, where, and the conditions under which your message will be communicated or used (at home? in a noisy and crowded bus station? in a doctor's office? in a commercial establishment where other customers are waiting for service?).

Effective design

Once you've decided on content, you'll want to present the information in a way that helps promote the message and does

not detract from readability and comprehension.²³ The "look" of your communication is a design issue that includes organizing the content effectively.

To some extent, content and design are interrelated and should proceed in parallel. There is no point writing 2000 words, for instance, if you've decided that the best medium for your message is a 4-panel brochure. Some preliminary design work will help you determine how many words

✓ Print Design Checklist

- ✓ Understand how type, headline placement and use of colour can enhance or inhibit communication (see resource list for the excellent book by Colin Wheildon, a typography and design consultant who has researched this field extensively).
- ✓ 12-point type is the minimum size for eyes that are middle-aged and older, although 13 or 14 point is even better.
- ✓ Choose a plain, clear typeface with a reputation for readability.
- ✓ Dark print on a light background is the easiest to read; avoid "dropped out" or "reverse" lettering – where text is white on a dark background.
- ✓ Avoid using all italics, all capital letters, and underlined type.
- ✓ Set text flush left and ragged right.
- ✓ Leave wide margins and space between paragraphs to avoid crowding text or cramming too much information on a page.
- ✓ Choose a comfortable line length for the size of type – on 8½" x 11" paper, two columns are preferable.
- ✓ Matte, non-glossy paper and ink improve legibility by reducing glare.
- ✓ Use high-definition photographs or illustrations.
- ✓ Avoid using wavy lines or dots, which can be hard on the eyes because they "swim" on the page.

you can fit on each panel, whether that is enough to convey everything you want to say, whether another vehicle might be better suited to your message, or whether your message is the right one for a given situation.

These rules and guidelines for effective print design are the result of research and experience. The suggested ideal size, style of fonts, spacing, simplicity, colour contrast, length of line and use of white spaces improve the readability and interest of a text. Many of these guidelines also apply to more recent media, including the design of web sites and online documentation. They are especially appropriate for communication aimed at seniors. Fine print is no easier to read on a computer screen than it is in the telephone directory or at the bottom of an insurance claim form.

Guidelines have also evolved for communicating messages by television and radio, for example, the ideal speed and pitch of the announcer's voice, the length of time an information telephone number is left on the TV screen and the number of times a crucial fact or bit of information is repeated. As discussed in the previous chapter, similar considerations apply to messages broadcast on public address systems and video displays.

Messages are everywhere

Finally, we must constantly remind ourselves that “communication” takes places at all levels, and that the question of senior friendly “design” extends not only to traditional communication media but

also to other elements in our environment. Consider, for example, what a municipality communicates to its older residents when the length of the light at a crosswalk requires pedestrians to sprint to the other side. Or what a shopping mall says to its senior customers when benches are few and far between and restrooms are almost inaccessible.

Businesses, services and other organizations that want to be known as senior friendly should take a comprehensive look at everything they do from the perspective of their older clients and customers.²⁴

Are administrative style, staffing policies and programming goals compatible with senior friendly service? Do training plans and incentive systems demonstrate the value attached to communicating effectively and serving a senior clientele well?

Are facilities conveniently located (close to public transportation) and designed for the safety and comfort of older users? Do entrances, floors, lighting, surfaces, acoustics, seating, signage and restroom location take into account the sensory and physical changes of aging and the needs of seniors? Readily available documentation on barrier-free design provides useful tips on building or retrofitting spaces and amenities.²⁵

The answers to these questions reflect the general attitude of our society toward seniors and reveal whether or not it is adapting to the new demographics of the Canadian population.

The High Road... and the Bottom Line



Communicating with seniors presents the same opportunities and challenges as communicating with any other large and evolving audience. If the advice in this publication can be summed up in a few sentences, they are:

- Think broadly when you think about communicating – almost everything you do as a service provider or business owner communicates your attitude toward your older customers and clients. Unintentional messages can be just as powerful as deliberately planned communication. As the Alberta Council on Aging says, senior friendliness is an attitude based on considering seniors' needs and respecting seniors' contributions. It's a matter of common sense and good manners.
- Don't try to persuade seniors you're doing them a favour. Embrace senior friendly communication because it is logical and makes sense for your program objectives or your bottom line: seniors bring their business to senior friendly stores and businesses, and they're loyal customers when they're well served.
- Know your audience, keep your knowledge up-to-date, and look to the members of your audience to tell you about their information needs and preferences. Design communication *with* your clients and customers – not *for* them.
- Think about the advantages and drawbacks of each communication medium as a means of reaching a senior audience and design communications that seize the advantages while avoiding the pitfalls.
- Find out about the communication concepts and design approaches that work best with senior audiences.
- Ensure a good match between your audience, your message and the medium you use to convey it.
- Explore alternative formats (large print, audio and video cassettes, braille, available on demand) and innovative strategies for reaching senior audiences (social networks, community contacts, trusted advisers, key informants).
- Demand action from governments and other administrations and social institutions. Communicating effectively with seniors makes sense from society's perspective: well-informed seniors are healthier, more active and involved, and can live in their own homes longer – so their quality of life is better.
- Seniors have time, energy and insight borne of life experience – they're a valuable asset to a society that respects them and takes the time to think about effective ways of reaching out to them.



Advice from the Experts - A List of Resources

Bibliography, further reading, resources and organizations that have looked at the issues examined in this booklet and can provide advice about them.

Knowing Your Audience

Alberta Council on Aging. *Senior Friendly™ Toolkit*. Edmonton: 1998.

Includes a video and workbook/binder with checklists for everything from senior friendly restaurants to senior friendly exercise programs. The Council also has *Senior Friendly™* stickers that can be handed out to local businesses, service providers and government offices in recognition of their efforts to communicate effectively with seniors. Also in preparation, a *Senior Friendly Training Initiative for Business* in collaboration with the Alberta Tourism and Education Council and other partners.

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Canada Coordinating Committee for the International Year of Older Persons. *Corporate Kit for the International Year of Older Persons 1999*. Ottawa: 1998. Also available on the Internet: http://iyop-aipa.ic.gc.ca/english/cokit_e.htm.

Environics Research Group. *Mature Market Monitor*.

A syndicated survey (available to subscribers only) that probes attitudes and behaviour in a range of areas, including seniors' issues and government programs; media and new information technologies; retirement planning; home issues; health status, chronic conditions, medication and health care; travel and travel health insurance; personal finances; insurance services; and general attitudes.

Internet: <http://erg.environics.net>

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Health Canada. Division of Aging and Seniors. *Reaching Out: A Guide to Communicating with Aboriginal Seniors*. Ottawa: 1998.

Useful suggestions following a consultation and a study on the best communication tools with Aboriginal seniors.

- Health Canada. Division of Aging and Seniors. *Principles of the National Framework on Aging: A Policy Guide*. Ottawa: 1998.
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Canadian Public Health Association. National Literacy and Health Program. *Creating Plain Language Forms for Seniors: A Guide for the Public, Private and Not-for-profit Sectors*. Ottawa: 1998.

Persuasive arguments about the benefits of plain language forms and the costs to seniors, companies and institutions of not providing them. Includes a glossary of plain words and many principles and tips on plain language and design.

Canadian Public Health Association. National Literacy and Health Program. *Easy Does It! Plain Language and Clear Verbal Communication: Training Manual*. Ottawa: 1998.

Valuable for many in the health professions and others – doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, opticians. Practical strategies, tips on office design, and samples of plain language information and consent forms. List of provincial literacy coalitions and literacy-related health programs and activities.

Canadian Public Health Association. National Literacy and Health Program. *Working with Low-literacy Seniors: Practical Strategies for Health Providers*. Ottawa: 1998.

A useful guide with many applications to service providers working in other sectors. Lots of information as well as extensive resource lists and a bibliography.

Canadian Transportation Agency. *Communication Barriers - A Look at Barriers to Communication Facing Persons with Disabilities Who Travel by Air*. Ottawa: 1997.

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A kit for health professionals with plain language tips for talking with seniors, and sample hand-outs.

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Presents rationale and suggestions for using language that is inclusive.

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Signage*. Ottawa: 1992.

Wheildon, Colin. *Type and Layout: How Typography and Design Can Get Your Message Across - or Get In the Way*. Berkeley, CA: Strathmoor Press, 1995.

A thoroughly researched guide to effective design for enhancing messages.

Alternative Formats

Many national organizations with branches across the country provide information on alternative formats. Check your local library or the phone book for these headings or organizations in your area: Canadian National Institute for the Blind; Transcription Services; Canadian Association of the Deaf; Canadian Hearing Society; Deaf Services; Disabled - Services; Reading Services; Braille printers; Captioning; Access; Handicap.

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Organizations

Alberta Council on Aging, 401, 10707 - 100th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3M1;

tel: (780) 423-7781; e-mail: acaging@compusmart.ab.ca;

internet: <http://www.compusmart.ab.ca/acaging>

Canadian Association of the Deaf, Suite 203-251 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1X3;

tel: (613) 565-2882.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind, 1929 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario

M4G 3E8; tel: (416) 480-7580; internet: <http://www.cnib.ca>

Canadian Public Health Association, National Literacy and Health Program, 400-1565

Carling Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 8R1; tel: (613) 725-3769;

e-mail: comm@cpha.ca; internet: www.cpha.ca. The CPHA's Plain Language Service can be reached at the same address.

Canadian Transportation Agency, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N9;

internet: <http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca>

Health Canada, Division of Aging and Seniors, Jeanne Mance Building, Address Locator

1908A1, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4; tel: (613) 952-7606; e-mail: seniors@hc-sc.gc.ca;

internet: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/seniors-aines>

Human Resources Development Canada, National Literacy Secretariat, Room 10E10,

15 Eddy Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5; tel: (819) 953-5280;

e-mail: seniors@hc-sc.gc.ca; internet: <http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm>

National Advisory Council on Aging, c/o Jeanne Mance Building, Address Locator

1908A1, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4; tel: (613) 957-1968;

internet: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/seniors-aines>

Statistics Canada, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6; internet: <http://www.statcan.ca/start.html>. For statistical data and profiles.

Notes



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