

## Research Themes and Trajectory Analysis of Library Services for the Elderly Abroad: Postprint

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To understand the research themes and developmental trajectory of library services for the elderly abroad, providing reference for library services for the elderly in China. [Method/Process] Through literature review, to systematically examine the research themes and developmental trajectory of library services for the elderly abroad from 1938 to 2017. [Results/Conclusion] Research on library services for the elderly abroad can be divided into three developmental stages, characterized by an expanding and increasingly segmented user base, and a research perspective shifting from focusing on libraries to focusing on the needs of the elderly. Service models have transitioned from simple, singular services to diversified and innovative ones, while the research philosophy has gradually shifted from serving the elderly to promoting their active participation. Simultaneously, the research exhibits certain limitations, such as excessive focus on elderly users within libraries while neglecting those outside, and a lack of introduction and evaluation of representative projects.

### Full Text

#### Analysis of Research Topics and Development of Library Services for Older Adults Abroad

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study aims to understand the research topics and developmental trajectory of library services for older adults abroad, providing reference for library services to older adults in China. [Method/Process]

Through literature review, this paper examines research topics and developments in library services for older adults abroad from 1938 to 2017. **[Result/Conclusion]** Research on library services for older adults abroad can be divided into three developmental stages, characterized by: continuously expanding and subdividing user groups; shifting research perspectives from focusing on libraries to focusing on older adults' needs; transitioning service approaches from single, simple services to diversified and innovative ones; and evolving research concepts from serving older adults to actively engaging them. However, research also reveals certain deficiencies, such as excessive focus on in-library older users while neglecting those outside the library, and a lack of introduction and evaluation of representative projects.

**Keywords:** library services to older adults; baby boomers; abroad

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## 1. Introduction

In March 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau released the report *An Aging World: 2015*, which indicated that in 2015, there were approximately 617 million people aged 65 and older worldwide, accounting for 8.5% of the global population. This number is projected to more than double by 2050, reaching about 1.6 billion people or 16.7% of the global population. The population of those aged 80 and above is expected to increase from 126 million in 2015 to 446 million. The report predicts that around 2020, the number of people aged 65 and older will exceed the number of children under five for the first time in history. The intensification of population aging is attributed to the post-WWII “baby boom” generation now entering old age, Europe’ s continued aging despite being the first region to experience it, and the rapid growth of elderly populations in Asia and Latin America.

The sharp increase in the older adult population has led to a growing number of older library users, making them one of the most important user groups. According to statistics, as of 2014, 65% of existing library users were older adults aged 50-75. The earliest traceable literature on library services for older adults is N. Stewart’ s article “Library Service and the Old,” published in *Library Journal* on March 15, 1938. Specialized library services for older adults first emerged in practice in 1946 when the Cleveland Public Library launched the “Live Long and Like It Library” club. Today, after nearly 80 years of development, library services for older adults have formed a relatively rich and systematic body of research.

This study aims to review nearly 80 years of literature on library services for older adults abroad to understand the evolution of research topics and developmental trajectory, providing reference for library services to older adults in China.

## 2. Research Topics and Development of Library Services for Older Adults Abroad

Between November 12 and December 30, 2017, the author conducted searches using the Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), SCI, EBSCO, ERIC, Elsevier academic journals, ProQuest dissertations and theses database, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign library catalog and union catalog (I-Share), and Google Scholar. The search strategy was: ab( “older adults” OR “older people” OR “elderly” OR “senior” OR “aging” OR “the aged” OR “baby boomers” OR “retirees” OR “fifty plus” OR “third age” OR “next chapter” OR “geriatric” OR “gerontology” ) AND ab(librar\*). Backward citation searching was also performed on the retrieved results. After deduplication and screening, 26 books (or pamphlets), 9 dissertations, and 182 journal articles were obtained, spanning from 1938 to 2017.

Based on the evolution of research topics, the development of library services for older adults can be divided into three stages: before the 1980s, the 1980s-1990s, and the early 21st century to the present. Each stage’s research topics and main characteristics are summarized and analyzed below.

**2.1 Before the 1980s: The Initial Stage** As the initial stage of research on library services for older adults, this period was primarily library-centered, focusing on reasons for slow development, current status, and service methods. Due to librarians’ insufficient attention to aging and generally negative attitudes toward older adults, services mainly consisted of providing books and services to homebound and institutionalized older adults who could not visit the library. Therefore, research focused on how to improve collection development and outreach services, emphasizing the need to strengthen large-print books and audiobook collections to meet older adults’ reading needs.

**Reasons for Slow Development of Library Services for Older Adults.** N. Stewart noted that, like the development of child and adolescent psychology, the origins of library services for older adults depended on the development of geriatric mental health. Only when old age is regarded as a stage of life rather than a physical condition can librarians and educators realize their responsibility to maintain older adults’ mental and intellectual lives. In 1971, the Cleveland Public Library identified factors affecting the development of library services for older adults nationwide, ranked from highest to lowest as: available funding, available staff, transportation equipment, older adults’ interest in libraries, and libraries’ interest in serving potential older users. The study particularly emphasized that staff interest and motivation were the primary factors, yet most librarians believed libraries should provide universal, appealing services ( “service-to-all” ) rather than specialized services for older adults. E. E. Kaner, by comparing gerontology and library science literature on services to older adults, pointed out that librarians’ concepts of aging and attitudes toward older adults aligned with broader societal developments—namely, that mainstream society previously valued youth and action while neglecting older adults, who

were similarly neglected by public libraries, with their special needs not differentiated from general adult services. After WWII, as approaches to aging issues changed dramatically and social gerontology developed, public libraries began to recognize older adults as a new user group.

**Current Status and Service Methods.** E. Phinney surveyed over 2,500 public libraries about the scope and characteristics of their services to older adults, finding that the four most common services were: providing books and promotional materials, shut-in service for those unable to go out, cooperation with other agencies, and group programs. R. Vainstein listed eight major categories of library services for older adults, including reader guidance, program planning (providing interesting programs for members of day care centers and service agencies), adult education, serving professionals in the aging field, public relations (promoting library resources, services, and programs), services for those unable to go out, retirement planning, and community planning. In 1971, the Cleveland Public Library reported that national library services for older adults mainly fell into three categories: outreach services (68.9%), group programs (19.2%), and special materials (11.9%). Outreach services referred to library initiatives to increase access for older adults with mobility barriers, including home or institutional delivery services and establishing branches or deposit collections in senior centers, residences, and nursing homes. Group programs referred to a series of services for older adults occurring inside or outside the library, such as clubs, film programs, book discussions, and educational programs. Special materials referred to teaching materials and auxiliary facilities for older adults with reading disabilities, including large-print books, audiobooks, magnification equipment, page turners, projectors for traditional printing, and special reference collections. The study emphasized that future library services for older adults should focus on maximizing older adults' access to library resources.

**2.2 The 1980s-1990s: Transition Period** During this stage, the main types of library services for older adults remained providing large-print resources and outreach services to homebound and institutionalized older adults. On one hand, collection development and reading services remained research priorities. On the other hand, because these traditional services were associated with negative images of older adults' physical and psychological disabilities, research generally focused on librarians' pervasive attitudes toward older adults and aging and how to transform them. Additionally, researchers gradually realized that the vast majority of older adults (90%) led active and independent lives, and began to emphasize other innovative services beyond traditional ones, such as information and consultation services, library education, library humanities programs, and volunteer services. However, research on these services remained general, often embedded within macro frameworks of services for older adults, lacking specialized and in-depth studies.

**Librarians' Attitudes and Perceptions of Older Adults.** Surveys showed that librarians held negative attitudes toward serving older adults during this

period, typically viewing them as physically deficient and dependent. J. Bowen attributed this to the influence of community care policy documents that librarians encountered. M. Dee et al., surveying the status of public library services for older adults in the UK, noted that libraries still maintained a “medical model” attitude, defining older adults as fragile and low-vision, focusing services on providing home services for lonely older adults, delivering collections to homes and day care centers, and providing adequate large-print materials. Libraries had not yet recognized the existence of active older adults. However, research also indicated changing attitudes among librarians. For example, M. Ellen found through surveys of academic librarians that negative stereotypes of older adults were declining, with professional librarians generally holding positive attitudes, though this did not necessarily translate into a desire to provide specialized services. The shift in attitude was also reflected in researchers gradually replacing terms like “elderly,” “the aged,” and “the aging” with “older adults,” “older people,” and “seniors.”

Regarding ways to transform librarians’ attitudes, E. Kempson et al. believed that cultivating and raising librarians’ awareness of ageist assumptions and prescriptive stereotypes prevalent in society was the starting point for overcoming the “medical model” perception of older adults. B. J. Turock argued that the philosophy of libraries serving all people was libraries’ greatest advantage, but became their greatest disadvantage when serving older adults. This philosophy led to undifferentiated treatment of older adults, hindering public libraries from identifying them as a primary audience and providing specialized services, emphasizing the need to transform librarians’ service philosophies.

**Service Methods for Older Adults. (1) Collection Development.** A. E. Dodson approached ageism in literature by providing teachers and librarians with methods for selecting, purchasing, using, and evaluating literary works. The article noted that ageism in existing literature adversely affected readers’ attitudes toward aging and older adults, conveying to children that older adults were unimportant and that later life was unhappy, harming older adults’ self-esteem. The study emphasized the need to remain sensitive to ageism, use critical reading skills to evaluate bias, and provided librarians with main content and guidelines for reviewing ageism in literature. B. J. Turock introduced detailed guidelines for libraries developing older adult service programs and information resources from four aspects: older adults’ book and material preferences, core aging collections, information centers and databases, and institutional catalogs. The study provided a collection development framework centered on older adults’ developmental tasks (major change tasks, adjustment tasks, and opportunity tasks) and introduced criteria for media selection.

Additionally, some scholars focused on access to collection resources. For example, R. A. Sit examined older adults’ search behaviors in representative online library catalogs, finding that older adults were more successful with simple searches (author, subject, title, etc.) than advanced searches (database conversion, keyword search, Boolean search, etc.). Compared to semantic knowledge

and technical skills for inputting queries, older adults had greater difficulties with conceptual knowledge, such as formulating search strategies, understanding and using keywords and Boolean searches, and understanding database content.

- (2) **Reading Services for Older Adults.** Research during this stage focused on factors affecting reading and reading needs. For instance, J. Kamin noted that, compared to age, education level and perceived life satisfaction were key factors affecting older adults' reading and library use. L. Anderson, by surveying older adults at senior centers about their reading and information needs, found that older adults liked to read about current events, health and wellness, cooking, religion, fiction/stories, crafts, history, travel, gardening/nature, and autobiographies. The study noted that libraries were not the primary resource for older adults' reading and information acquisition, as older adults could obtain most of their desired reading materials elsewhere. Therefore, local public libraries might need to focus more on programs than simply providing reading materials, such as fully utilizing older adults' interest in current affairs, conducting group discussions or providing relevant video programs, and attracting older adults around health information.
- (3) **Diversified Services.** B. J. Turock introduced library service programs and delivery systems for older adults from aspects including program and service access, information life, lifelong learning and education services, local history/genealogy/oral history, and civic participation. The study identified five key areas for the continued development of library services for older adults: access, information, education, management, and professional training, with the key being to view older adults as valuable social resources. The information life section emphasized the importance of providing career and employment information and consultation services for older adults in the information society, noting that libraries were not substitutes for job information centers but rather served as information exchanges for job opportunities and searches. The main purpose of information consultation services was to understand community older adults' interests and needs and provide relevant information sources. The civic participation section noted that older adults could serve as decision-makers and volunteers in library services for older adults. The biggest problem with older volunteers was poor management. Older adults' reasons for volunteering were diverse but could be attributed to one factor—job satisfaction, with volunteer programs that promoted job satisfaction being those that enhanced older adults' creative and productive functions. D. A. Kramer noted that as people age, they become information disadvantaged, and libraries should provide educational and information services to help them achieve personal and intellectual integration. L. S. Lamdin et al. also found that libraries were the primary community resource for older adult learning. R. J. Rubin proposed that library service programs for older adults should include information lecture series (such as retirement planning), audiovisual series, humanities discussion series, bibliotherapy, rem-

iniscence programs, creative writing or autobiography projects, genealogy or local history projects, assistance programs, community information or health information centers, caregiver discussion programs, and intergenerational programs.

**2.3 Early 21st Century to Present: Maturation and Innovation** Since the 21st century, as the “baby boom” generation has gradually entered old age, researchers have begun to rethink the characteristics of older adults and the positioning of libraries, attracting widespread attention and rapid development in research on library services for older adults. On one hand, the arrival of the “longevity revolution” and the large baby boomer generation, with their different characteristics from traditional older adults (such as higher education levels, being healthy and active, and enthusiastic about participating in social life), has led to continuous subdivision of research subjects and strong attention to the baby boomer group. On the other hand, with the World Health Organization’s “active aging” framework (emphasizing health, social participation, and security to address population aging) and the Fifth White House Conference on Aging’s focus on productive aging, researchers advocate shifting from the perspective of older adult groups to focusing on their diverse service, information, learning, social, and space needs, providing diversified services. Therefore, research on older adults’ reading services, information needs and information literacy (especially health literacy), lifelong learning, computer technology and internet services, volunteer services (especially intergenerational services), and library space construction has become the focus of this stage, with specialized studies continuously increasing.

**Characteristics of Baby Boomer Users and Subdivision of Older Adult Users.** With the gradual emergence of the baby boomer group, research on their positive characteristics has increased. Scholars generally believe that baby boomer older adults have good education and technological literacy; are “greedy information consumers” who want access to electronic information; expect efficient and timely service delivery; consider information and lifelong learning important; value time and convenience; are economically better off than previous generations; hope or need to continue working after retirement, being in semi-retirement or “transition” stages; are willing to participate in social affairs; are enthusiastic about new things; prefer print but also like online resources; and view libraries as social centers and neutral, non-commercial spaces.

Attention to baby boomer users has expanded the research subjects to include quasi-older adults and older adults over 50. For example, D. D. Schull, in her book *50+ Library Services: Innovation in Action*, categorized services for people aged 50 and above as services for older adults, providing retirement planning and active aging preparation for pre-retirement older adults. In response to differences between baby boomers and previous generations, research has gradually subdivided older adult user groups, emphasizing attention to the diversity and heterogeneity of older adult groups and providing diversified services according

to different characteristics.

For instance, A. Ahlvers divided older adults into the G.I. Generation (born 1900-1922, aged 85+), the Silent Generation (born 1923-1942, aged 64-84), and the Baby Boomer Generation (born 1943-1963, aged 44-83). M. Kahle further divided baby boomers into the “leading edge group” (born 1946-1955) and the “trailing edge group” (born 1956-1961). The former fully utilized post-WWII prosperity, owned homes, had little debt, and were economically and politically strong; the latter did not have the same development opportunities, experienced economic depression, and faced financial difficulties. M. Sloan, from a health perspective, divided older adults into three categories: those entering old age (including those over 50 or reaching official retirement age, depending on the definition), a group of older adults transitioning between health, activity, and frailty, and frail older adults.

**Older Adults’ Needs for and Positioning of Libraries.** The positive image and diversity of older users (especially baby boomers) have led researchers to break through the single library perspective, emphasizing research from older adults’ perspectives on their diverse needs for and positioning of libraries. For example, S. Dobson noted that baby boomer older users who failed to use or occasionally used libraries were disappointed because library collections did not match their needs and interests. Compared to previous generations’ primary need for book borrowing, baby boomer users had multiple needs beyond borrowing.

E. Nelson Decker explored baby boomers’ three special but interrelated needs for public library systems: social needs, service and program needs, and technology needs. Social needs required libraries to exist as physical places, including creating “older adult places” like “children’s places,” spacious shelving, adequate seating in materials areas, at least one wheelchair in the library, lower service counters, coffee shops when possible, and locating new libraries near other centers. Service and program needs required libraries to survey older adults’ needs and feedback to create services matching their interests, create volunteer opportunities for older adults, invest resources in retraining library older adults, and cooperate with other agencies. Technology needs required libraries to provide corresponding hardware and software, conduct computer training, use the internet to locate and consume appropriate health information, and maintain contact with family and friends.

Older adults tend to position libraries as their learning centers and social centers, with learning centers being more prominent. For example, A. Sloane-Scale et al., in a survey of Canadian older adults, found that 81% considered courses and seminars the most valuable learning methods, and libraries were their preferred learning venues. K. Williamson et al., in a survey of 60 Australian baby boomer older adults, found that older adults viewed libraries as social centers and showed strong interest in courses and interest group meetings. R. M. Sabo noted that the “third age” was generally interested in participating in library programs and viewed libraries as the primary place for learning.

**Collection Development for Library Services to Older Adults.** With the development of the internet, collection development during this stage focused on building library network and electronic resources, achieving integration of physical and virtual collections. For example, A. M. Kleiman listed library collection resources and sources for baby boomers (including their parents and grandparents) from aspects including basic collections, magazines, films, brain health, technology, age-friendly city projects, and web resources, aiming to expand physical and virtual collections beyond traditional large-print books. Additionally, research on special collections and other types of literature has become a focus. B. T. Mates emphasized that libraries should pay attention to building special media collections for older adults. M. Y. Antunez et al., from the perspective of university faculty, surveyed important older adult research materials and contact strategies used in research and teaching, emphasizing that as gray literature on older adults increases, libraries play an important role as critical reviewers of gray literature materials.

**Specific Services and Programs for Older Adults in Libraries.** Related research positions libraries as service centers, information centers, learning centers, social centers, and third places for older adults. Consequently, scholars have actively explored services to meet older adults' diverse needs.

- (1) **Reading Behaviors of Older Adults.** Research during this stage focused on older adults' reading behaviors and motivations. For example, B. Luyt described the reading behaviors of older adults in public library reading clubs, noting that word-of-mouth was the primary way older adults learned about clubs; the main reasons for participation were increasing knowledge and discovering social participation opportunities, with becoming more sociable being the main benefit. Reading was mainly for utilitarian purposes rather than intrinsic enjoyment. Reading clubs created a public space primarily for older women, and word-of-mouth communication brought about certain social exclusion—resulting in increased participation of “homogeneous” older adults without reaching broader older adult populations. B. Luyt et al. investigated older adults' concepts and current status of library reading from four aspects: gender, class, ageism, and inherent reading concepts. The study found that the library reading experience (solitary, quiet, individual, and serious) limited older women's participation; relative poverty of class made some older adults treat libraries as somewhere to go (a refuge); internalized ageism hindered their desire for and perceived usefulness of library reading programs; and connecting reading with work and income rather than entertainment. The article proposed library recommendations to promote older adult reading, including providing reading spaces for older women, delivering materials to older adults (rather than waiting for them to come), and providing more attractive reading programs.
- (2) **Information Needs and Information Literacy.** This stage further subdivided older adults' diversified information needs, with particular fo-

cus on health information needs and health literacy development, actively responding to the WHO' s advocacy for healthy aging.

Regarding older adults' information needs: E. Okobi emphasized that older adults are not a homogeneous entity and have different information needs due to different socioeconomic statuses. P. M. Rothstein and D. D. Schull, from the two dimensions of whether to adhere to work orientation and whether to adhere to new or traditional values, built a life course model of information exploration moments for libraries, dividing older adults into five types: Traditional Golden Years (emphasizing relaxation), New Golden Years (emphasizing self-actualization and self-development), Extended Middle Age (extended middle age), Second Career (new focus on work), and Portfolio Life (emphasizing balanced lifestyle). The study proposed that libraries should provide different information services for each type: Traditional Golden Years—resources for recreational activities such as travel, entertainment, hobbies, and sports; New Golden Years—resources for pursuing cultural and educational enrichment, socialization, new skills, and credentials; Extended Middle Age—resources for learning skills to maintain professional competence; Second Career—information on how to start new businesses or ventures, pursue second careers for social benefits, and turn hobbies into careers; Portfolio Life—information on updating professional skills, identifying amateur career opportunities, and learning to live a more balanced life. Later, a category of information needs for caregivers of grandchildren, spouses, or parents was added.

Research on older adults' health information needs and health literacy development: K. Eriksson-Backa conducted a small-scale study on Finnish Swedish-speaking minority older adults over 65 regarding health information acquisition and the library' s role. The study found that when seeking health information, older adults rarely used libraries and librarians, instead preferring medical experts. Libraries and librarians were not important sources for health information. Older adults appeared to have relatively little difficulty identifying health needs and selecting resource sources but faced obstacles in understanding and quality evaluation. The article argued that improving older adults' information literacy was the responsibility of information experts and that more connections needed to be established between older adults and libraries. R. N. C. Ugwuanyi noted that public libraries were important institutions for providing adequate and timely health information to older adults and proposed strategies for public libraries to promote healthy aging, including collecting health information resources, integrating information, creating socially supportive environments, and raising older adults' awareness of library services for them. Additionally, scholars introduced health literacy programs implemented by libraries, such as the "Health & Wellness To Go" health tote bag collaborative project between Munson Healthcare' s Community Health Library and the Grand Traverse County Senior Center Network in Michigan, the "Senior Consumer Health Awareness Training" health information literacy program conducted by the Sims Memorial Library at Southeastern Louisiana University and senior centers, and the older adult health information acquisition project jointly conducted by the MD Geriatric

Resource Center and the Fairfax Health Sciences Library. B. Xie et al. evaluated health literacy programs, with results showing that older participants held absolutely positive views of the training program, with many beginning to use online resources to find high-quality health and medical information and further guiding them to make decisions regarding health or medical matters.

Some scholars also explored older adults' digital literacy: N. J. Lenstra, through surveys of digital literacy among older adults at senior centers and public libraries, found that community-based information infrastructure such as senior centers and public libraries indeed supported older adults' digital literacy (though the support was not obvious). The study noted that public institutions such as libraries could reshape their position in the aging information society by embracing older adults and proposed practical and teaching recommendations: transforming older adults from passive service recipients to active participants, opposing ageism, developing library services for aging communities, and developing embedded librarianship.

- (3) **Computer Technology and Internet.** With the popularization of computers in libraries and the rapid development of the internet, researchers have continuously emphasized the role of libraries in older adult skills training, actively conducting computer training and internet services and training for older adults. Among these, library website design and accessibility for older adults is a research focus. For example, D. H. Charbonneau, based on internet design accessibility principles, evaluated the older adult service web pages of 104 public libraries. The results found that no public library website design achieved 100% accessibility, creating barriers for older users seeking library resources and services. The study called on libraries to follow accessibility design principles to create barrier-free web pages for older users. Y. J. Yi surveyed the accessibility of the websites of 20 public libraries with the highest proportions of disabled and older users, finding that most public library websites did not meet accessibility standards and did not provide effective information services for vulnerable groups needing special assistance. P. A. Larkin-Lieffers examined older adults' use of library OPACs, finding that difficult interfaces, insufficient librarian assistance, little or no written instructions, and insufficient time to learn were the main reasons older adults did not use OPACs. P. M. Rothstein and D. D. Schull noted that libraries should not only provide physical space but also virtual space for older adults, summarizing library virtual space design considerations from two aspects: physical changes (website design, content and organization, website use and training) and older adults' special interests and needs.
- (4) **Lifelong Learning.** With the continuous popularization and development of the lifelong learning concept, research on the necessity and methods of libraries conducting lifelong learning for older adults has increased. For example, H. Welliver noted that re-envisioning public libraries as the center of lifelong learning for all people while improving older adults' qual-

ity of life was key to ensuring public libraries remain relevant and vibrant in this era of change. Public libraries, especially those embracing the makerspace movement, are evolving into informal learning centers nationwide. However, both literature research and practical progress show that public libraries still have significant gaps in providing lifelong learning for older adults. Therefore, ALA-accredited library schools should develop teaching courses or certification programs focused on services for older adults, state library agencies should provide more professional training opportunities for librarians, the library profession should establish professional status for librarians serving older adults, and actively practice to make public libraries key places for older adults' lifelong learning. M. Y. Wang, by investigating blogs established by older adults and public libraries, noted that public libraries could use blogs to play a supporting role in older adults' self-learning and promote successful aging. N. Innocent believed that museums, libraries, and archives could play important roles in older adults' lifelong learning, helping them transition from full-time work to diversified combinations of work, caregiving, and volunteering. These institutions could help older adults engage in lifelong learning by providing intergenerational learning opportunities, digital resources and older adults' digital skills, trusted information resources, expanded resources and spaces, and recruiting older adult volunteers.

- (5) **Volunteer Service and Intergenerational Programs.** With the proposal of active aging and productive aging, and baby boomers' general willingness to participate in social affairs, research on fully developing and utilizing library human resources of older adults has increased. Studies emphasize not only focusing on library services for older adults but also paying special attention to older adults' participation, enabling them to serve themselves, libraries, and their communities through participation.

Regarding the necessity and significance of developing intergenerational programs: S. Gough et al. published the book *Serving Grandfamilies in Libraries: A Handbook and Programming Guide*, arguing that libraries are both information places and places for personal connections, and that libraries should consider intergenerational services and programs to encourage exchanges between grandparents and grandchildren. The book also elaborated on the growing trend of grandparent-headed families in the United States, noting that the most important benefit of libraries developing intergenerational programs was positioning themselves as active and positive members of the community.

Regarding types of intergenerational programs: D. D. Schull divided societal intergenerational program types into five categories: learning programs, recreational programs, cultural and historical heritage programs, programs addressing social problems, and programs addressing practical problems. She noted that libraries tended to develop learning, recreational, and cultural and historical heritage programs, such as literacy teaching, after-school homework tutoring for youth, storytelling for children, volunteer services in kindergartens or

nursing homes, chess clubs, knitting classes, art classes, and book discussions. Among these, technology mentor programs, multi-generational civic engagement programs, and intergenerational games were popular library intergenerational programs.

Regarding intergenerational reading: I. Stričević et al., in the book *Intergenerational Solidarity in Libraries*, noted that to fulfill their social roles, libraries should actively reduce age segregation and loneliness, eliminate ageism, and build cohesive societies by promoting intergenerational reading between older adults and youth. The book also discussed library intergenerational dialogue theory, research, and practice, as well as reading as a bond between generations. V. A. Walter introduced the Los Angeles Public Library's "Grandparents and Books" program where older adults read to children.

Regarding intergenerational learning: H. Y. Sung et al. explored the connotation and characteristics of intergenerational learning, namely focusing on communication efforts between young children and older adults, characterized by communication, collaboration, creation, continuous shared thinking, and play. The study emphasized that public libraries play important roles in supporting intergenerational learning and noted that public libraries could support intergenerational learning through three approaches: in-library, family-based, and online. K. Baker constructed a "text-technology" intergenerational literacy model for lifelong learning information literacy and cultural heritage, noting that libraries, archives, and museums should actively cooperate to build bridges between young and old in coordinating roles.

- (6) **Library Space Construction.** To meet older adults' social needs for libraries, research on library space construction has gradually increased. Studies advocate transforming libraries into spaces for social interaction and self-actualization for older adults, achieving the meaning construction of libraries as relationships and democratic construction. For example, W. Robbins, based on care theory and library space theory, explored libraries' spatial positioning and services in the care of baby boomers for their elders from five dimensions: library as physical space, private space, information space, space without walls, and institutional rights space. The study noted that both baby boomers and older adults supported public libraries building space services based on caring relationships between two generations, believing that libraries should build caring relationship services between older adults like parent-child relationships, reflecting the meaning construction of libraries as place and as relationship. A. M. Kleiman introduced the Senior Spaces project established by the Old Bridge Public Library in New Jersey for baby boomers, older adults, and their families.

**2.4 Development Status, Problems, and Solutions** This stage also generally focuses on the development status and case introductions of library services for older adults. Research shows that systematic services for older adults in libraries are still rare, and service levels remain relatively low. For example,

R. M. Sabo noted that libraries were slow to notice the rapidly growing older adult population and rarely provided specialized services for the “third age.” R. Bennett, in a four-month survey of 50 public libraries, found that although 74% of public libraries conducted adult programs aimed at improving and enriching lifelong learning opportunities, only 8% provided specialized programs and services for older adults, 32% provided basic computer training programs, and less than 50% provided assistive technology. M. Joseph and D. Piper noted that current library services for older adults mainly provided large-print books and audiobooks for frail or disabled older adults and services for homebound or institutionalized older adults, with less involvement in deep-level services.

In terms of case introductions, C. A. Perry introduced the most common older adult service program in U.S. public libraries, “55 Alive.” R. M. Sabo listed specific programs implemented by libraries from aspects including older adult transition programs, art programs, social and recreational programs, health and medical programs, and intergenerational programs.

Additionally, scholars have identified and analyzed problems in library services for older adults, mainly including: lack of funds, professionals, resources, and space; barriers in library buildings; older adults’ unawareness of library resources and services; libraries’ lack of understanding of older adults’ needs; libraries’ uncertainty about what types of services to provide; ageism among staff; imperfect organizational structure of library services (traditionally viewing older adults as a special group needing services from outreach staff or departments); lack of forums for change; lack of library education courses or certification programs; and lack of appropriate terminology for older adults (most libraries use “seniors” to address older adults, but this term implies dependency, frailty, or loneliness and inability to serve the community, which does not match active older adults).

In terms of development solutions, scholars have proposed solutions from aspects including older adults’ needs and characteristics, collection development, service and program types, finance, staff training, promotion, and cooperation. Specific recommendations include: incorporating older adult services into public libraries’ overall planning and service categories; considering older adults’ needs and opinions in existing or newly developed library services and establishing feedback mechanisms; recognizing the heterogeneity of older adult users and balancing services for institutionalized and homebound older adults with those for mobile, healthy older adults; expanding older adult collection resources; developing diversified service programs such as lifelong education, technical support and computer training, intergenerational programs, and information consultation and provision; providing convenience for older adults to visit libraries and borrow materials, paying attention to the needs of older adults with visual, auditory, and mobility barriers, and increasing accessibility; conducting staff education and training to cultivate positive attitudes toward aging and older adults and redefining impressions of retirement; focusing on the use of older adult human resources rather than aging problems; improving promotion and publicity services to ensure current and potential users understand library ser-

vices and facilities; seeking financial support through multiple channels; and strengthening cooperation, including establishing alliances and networking with other agencies to build collaborative services.

### 3. Conclusion

Since the first specialized research literature on library services for older adults emerged in 1938, research has undergone nearly 80 years of development, showing characteristics of continuously expanding and subdividing user groups, shifting research perspectives from focusing on libraries to focusing on older adults' needs, transitioning service approaches from single, simple services to diversified and innovative services, and gradually shifting research concepts from serving older adults to actively engaging them. However, research also shows certain deficiencies, such as paying too much attention to older adult users inside the library while neglecting those outside, and lacking introduction and evaluation of representative projects.

Future research on library services for older adults should pay more attention to the needs of older adult users, especially those outside the library; focus on the baby boomer generation, a large older adult group; strengthen continuous research on libraries' roles in health information needs and literacy, lifelong learning, internet services (especially website design and accessibility), intergenerational programs and other volunteer services, and library space construction; and strengthen introduction and evaluation of representative cases to realize libraries' important roles as service centers, information centers, learning centers, social centers, and third places for older adults.

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