10 Ways to Make Your Library Age-Friendly

1. **Make everyone feel welcome.** A friendly smile and "Can I help you?" will let people—of any age—know you are happy they have come. You want them to know the library is *their* place.

2. **Encourage social engagement.** *What?!! Speed-dating for those 50+??* Maybe. . .but so much more. As people get older, and perhaps retire, their social networks may shrink. Something to do on a *regular* basis, perhaps exercise or art classes, at a price they can afford (free) will give older adults the opportunity to meet others while pursuing their interests in a wonderful setting—***the public library***!

3. **Be accessible.** Don't put materials where they are hard to reach—too high or too low. Make sure aisles are clear and try to ensure that a person using a wheelchair or walker can get not just in the door but to all parts of the library. Make assistive listening devices available for programs and classes. Consider offering real-time (CART) captioning for programs. And have the best lighting possible, please. This is a safety, as well as an accessibility, issue.

4. **Use bulletin boards and local newspapers to advertise library locations, hours, programs, and services.** Not just Twitter, Facebook, blogs and whatever new social media come along. Post flyers with library information and events in places outside the library as well as inside.

5. **Think of the whole person.** As you do library outreach to retirement communities, AARP groups, senior centers, and other organizations targeting older adults, let them know about the full range of services at the library, not just "senior" activities. Downloadables may be just the thing for people who have a hard time getting out to the library; information about children's books and programs may be useful for grandparents. Emphasize opportunities to interact with other generations at the library.

6. **Have chairs in convenient places, and some of them with arms.** Standing on a line to borrow or return library materials or use a computer is hard for someone who has back problems; a nearby chair can make a world of difference. Also, many older people and people with certain disabilities have difficulty getting in and out of armless chairs—keep this in mind in your program rooms and computer labs.

7. **Use older adults as volunteers.** They may be looking for ways to be useful, and just waiting to be asked. Every community has older people with talent, experience and time. Think of them as your partners.

8. **Consider the collection.** Large print books, and other formats for those with vision loss, in as many languages as your community speaks, are vital. And be sure to use large print signs, brochures and flyers. Have various types of magnifiers available and advertise them widely.

9. **Offer computer classes for patrons who are 50+.** Knowing they will be learning with others who may be new to the computer world can make the classes more appealing. Be patient, though you may need to explain things a few times.

10. **Never underestimate the power of a public restroom.** If you have one, this may be the very thing that draws people—and particularly older adults—into your library. Share it gladly. Why not a sign? *Yes, we have a public restroom!*