



Diverse Older People On-Line Interim Report

January 2002

Community Praxis Co-op Ltd

& Multicultural Development Association Inc.

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	4
Acknowledgments	5
Relevant policy contexts.....	6
Report on the initial workshop	9
References	19

Introduction

This interim report provides initial findings of *Diverse Older People On-Line*, an action-research project that aims to provide Brisbane City Council with advice about ways that Council can make their Internet initiatives more accessible to seniors of non-English speaking background.

This interim report provides:

- An introduction to the project
- A brief description of the methodology
- An overview of relevant policy contexts
- Findings from the first workshops.

Background

The background to this project is provided in the project brief:

Brisbane City Council is developing an ebrisbane portal that will provide an online forum for connecting communities, giving information about the city, recreation and business opportunities as well as the ability for Brisbane residents to do online transactions which relate to Council services.

Council is concerned about the ability for people from non-English speaking backgrounds to access the site and is wanting to test languages other than English (LOTE) websites with residents to advise it on how to develop an appropriate site for all Brisbane residents.

Aims

The *Diverse Older People On Line Project* had three aims:

1. To trial a specific multilingual website to assess its useability as a model for Brisbane City Council (BCC) to develop multilingual information for the ebrisbane portal: www.multiculturalaustralia.com.au
2. To trial the multilingual tutorial provided in CD form by BCC for use of the Internet and the actual site.
3. To generate a framework for the development of multilingual introductory material for the ebrisbane portal.

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

Implementation

Community Praxis Co-op Ltd was contracted by the Multicultural Development Association Inc. to implement *Diverse Older People On-Line* as an extension of the *Sharing Our Wisdom* project.

Sharing Our Wisdom was an innovative experiment in the application of a community development methodology to the creation of opportunities for sustainable cultural exchange, learning and friendship in order for seniors from diverse cultural communities to develop a sense of well being in their community. The seniors involved were from the Spanish speaking, Iranian, former Yugoslav and Tamil communities of Brisbane.

The *Diverse Older People On-line Project* worked with groups of seniors from three of these communities: Spanish speaking, Iranian, and former Yugoslav.

It was implemented by a team from community Praxis Co-op: team leader Gerard Dowling; project worker Danijel Kis and bi-cultural workers Benny Behzadpour and Gloria Perla.

Methodology

The methodology for the of the DOPOL Project was to:

1. link with seniors from each of these communities through a bi-cultural worker and establish a group who were willing to participate in the project;
2. bring these seniors together in a workshop to provide a basic introduction to the Internet, to assess their Internet skills and to elicit information about their perceptions and potential use of the Internet in general;
3. provide additional training for each of the groups that would allow the seniors to develop their skills to the extent that they would be able to trial Internet material;
4. conduct workshops at which the seniors trialed the material and provided feedback; and
5. undertake an analysis of the results and develop a framework for the development of introductory material to make BCC net initiatives accessible to users who are seniors of NESB background.

Acknowledgments

Bi-cultural workers

In each of the communities we recruited bi-cultural workers who were the key to the implementation of the project. Their detailed understanding of their own communities, high level of rapport with their seniors, and confidence in their own culture were critical. They demonstrated high levels of skill and subtlety in brokering sometimes complex exchanges of information, meaning, organisation and relationships. They were:

- Danijel Kis Bosnian and Former Yugoslav communities
- Benny Behzadpour Iranian communities
- Gloria Perla Spanish speaking communities.

Seniors who participated

In each of the communities that we worked with, we identified seniors who we asked to make a commitment to the project - to work with us to provide advice to Brisbane City council about ways that Council could make their net initiatives accessible to novice users who are seniors of non-English speaking background.

As in the *Sharing Our Wisdom* project, these seniors were a delight. They engaged with the project and with one another with enthusiasm and creativity. For all of them English was their second language. All preferred written communication in their own language. All had to work very hard to conduct a simple conversation in English. They persisted with a gentleness, patience, determination and resilience that was inspirational.

The seniors were the heart and soul of the project. Their reflections are captured in the quotes throughout this report.

Brisbane City Council staff

Tatiana Netchpai - Team Leader for Library Services Libraries - East - welcomed the seniors into the Stones Corner library, and conducted out-of hours training sessions with patience and clear explanations.

Kay Oliver – Multicultural Partnerships Program Officer provided liaison with Council and support for the project.

TIS Interpreters

Interpreters through Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) were brought to events and activities where possible to provide a professional level of interpreting. Their contribution was invaluable in enabling the participants to maximise their understanding and participation.

Multicultural Development Association

The staff and committee of Multicultural Development Association provided support throughout the project. In particular Linda Richards (Community Project Officer) who resourced the project with a diligence and thoroughness that made the job of the project team much easier. Linda's knowledge of what else was happening in the multicultural affairs field and ability to use her networks to bring relevant information when it was needed meant that the project flowed with an easy confidence because we were sure it was well-informed.

Relevant policy contexts

Living in Brisbane 2010

This issue draws together five related themes of livability from *2010*: city of inclusive communities; smart city; prosperous city; accessible city; and regional and world city.

A city of inclusive communities

The 2010 vision for inclusive communities would see Brisbane as a vibrant city *made up of strong and diverse communities ... Opportunities should be provided for all citizens to enjoy and participate fully in the life of the city as a whole ... The most vulnerable in our communities need specific support to increase their choices and sense of inclusion.*

When individuals learn, both informally and formally, our whole community becomes richer, more successful and more competitive.

Council can help by:

- *Supporting our libraries as they become community hubs that provide a full range of life-long learning services*

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

- *Developing a highly interactive web site to encourage communication with and between people of all ages and community groups*
- *Establishing a “newcomers to the City” initiative to help new residents and migrants access services and community networks.*

Smart city

As a smart city, in 2010 Brisbane ‘should seek to be a more open society where technology makes it easier for people to have their say, gain access to services and to stay in touch with what is happening around them, simply and cheaply. All residents will have access to the Internet, and the ability to use it.’

Aims of Brisbane that have particular significance for NESB seniors:

- *Establishing on-line community and business forums for collaboration and the exchange of ideas and information*
- *Providing affordable Internet access*
- *Establishing community learning centres and training to teach people how to use information technology*
- *Providing access to all council services through the Internet*
- *Finding ways for every household to have a computer terminal*

Prosperous city

Brisbane will be a smart, dynamic and growing city with diverse economic, social and lifestyle options. It will be ... sought as a place to live by creative people and leading professionals from around Australia and overseas. Ideas for prosperity include identifying and minimising inequality brought about by social and technological change, such as “the digital divide”.

Accessible city

Currently ... Council’s Community Relations Strategy ensures Brisbane is welcoming and supportive for people from all backgrounds and walks of life.

In 2010 ... technology will have revolutionised the delivery of government services. Government will provide on-line access to services and information ... services and facilities are flexible ... opportunities are available to all.

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

A regional and world city

In 2010 Brisbane be an important international city. We will have commercial, financial, technological and cultural links across the region and the nation ... information technology, in particular, will let government service providers offer choices about how, when and where people can choose and access services.

Community Relations Strategy

The Community Relations Strategy articulates Council's role in recognising and embracing Brisbane's cultural diversity. The aims are:

- **Leadership.** Council plays a leadership role in promoting Brisbane as an inclusive city which values and embraces cultural diversity.
- **Inclusive service delivery.** Council integrates cultural diversity into its core business.
- **Community partnerships.** Council works collaboratively to improve the community relations environment of the city at both symbolic and practical levels.
- **Productive diversity.** Council seeks to maximise economic benefits of the city's cultural diversity.

Queensland Government Language Services Policy

The Queensland Government recognises that a significant number of people do not speak English at all or well enough to communicate adequately with officers of Queensland Government agencies. This policy is designed to enable clients to access services fairly and equitably and to ensure that service delivery is responsive and of high quality.

The QGLSP complements the Multicultural Queensland Policy, the core principles of which are:

- *Access: all Queenslanders enjoy equitable access to services and programs;*
- *Participation: all Queenslanders enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from all aspects of life in Queensland; and*

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

- *Cohesion: all Queenslanders share responsibility for the continuing development of Queensland as a cohesive and harmonious society.*

The QGLSP is also consistent with the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society, endorsed by Ministers at Commonwealth, State/Territory levels and local government leaders, which applies the following core principles to the planning and delivery of quality services and programs:

- *Access*
- *Equity*
- *Communication*
- *Responsiveness*
- *Effectiveness*
- *Efficiency*
- *Accountability.*

Report on the initial workshop

A questionnaire was developed in consultation with MDA and BCC, and administered to the seniors who had participated in an Internet workshop conducted by BCC Librarian Tatiana Netchpai at Stones Corner Library. Participants wrote their responses in their own language, and these were translated at a later date.

1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Ten seniors participated in the initial workshop: 6 female and 4 male. Their ages were: 50, 53, 55, 57, 57, 61, 61, 64, 71, and 74.

Their Ethnic backgrounds were:

- 1 Latin American (Chile)
- 3 Latin American (El Salvador)
- 1 Bosnian (Former Yugoslavia)
- 1 Bosnian (Croatian)

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

- 1 Serbian (Former Yugoslavia)
- 3 Iranian.

2. Experience of the Internet

Of the ten seniors who participated in the workshop, five had never before used the Internet, two had used it a few times, and three indicated that they use it at a frequency of once a month.

These three use the Internet for varying purposes:

- to Search for friends
- to Search for more info about my country
- to practice how to use it
- to research
- to shop
- to send e-mails.

3. Motivation for wanting to learn to use the Internet

All participants identified why they want to learn to use the Internet. Between them, they provided eighteen responses. Analysis of those responses identifies five reasons that seniors of NESB background want to learn to use the Internet. The frequency of responses (presented in brackets) indicates the relative importance of these reasons to this group. Quotes in the words of participants illustrate the significance of this motivation for individuals. The reasons are:

To find out information (6)

- *'Would like to learn more about information to help me easier settle in Australia – help me faster adopt to new city and new country.'*
- *'Would like to know how to use Internet well enough to search more information on topics of my interest: astrology, books, science...'*

To keep up with news from their own country, and international news. (5)

To communicate with family and friends. (4)

- *'I would like to communicate with friends from Former Yugoslavia spread all around the world.'*
- *'Make a contact with friends overseas (they are spread all around after the war in my country).'*
- *'Would like to communicate with my daughter (family) overseas.'*

To read newspapers and magazines in their own language. (2)

- *'Would like to 'read' newspapers and magazines in my language.'*

To practice English. (2)

4. Accessing information about Brisbane

The capacity of the Internet to give them access to information about Brisbane was considered important by the participants. The kinds of information that they would like to be able to get from the Internet about Brisbane was identified in two ways: in response to four examples provided; and in response to an invitation to articulate their own ideas.

In response to examples provided, all said they would like information about *what's happening in their own community in Brisbane* (10). As well, nine identified *free concerts and performances*; seven *Bus timetables*; and seven *Library hours*.

In response to an invitation to articulate their own ideas, 24 ideas were articulated. Analysis of these responses identifies three key areas of interest for seniors: lifelong learning, social and recreation opportunities, and information about topics of interest.

Lifelong learning (10)

In articulating their own ideas, these NESB seniors showed a strong interest in the potential for the Internet to provide them with access to

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

opportunities for lifelong learning. Some of their ideas indicate the wide range of interest in the group:

- *'Third age University.'*
- *'Other general interest courses.'*
- *'Tertiary education opportunities for seniors.'*
- *'Self development classes.'*
- *'Art classes for seniors.'*

Other responses reflect the dilemma that NESB seniors confront: they want to learn English and to use it more because they recognise its value as a more universal language in Brisbane, and at the same time want to be able to access information in their own language so that they can be confident of their understanding.

Three responses indicated a desire for different types of opportunities to learn English.

- *'I would like English classes for older people.'*
- *'Some English language tutorials.'*

Three responses identified desire to learn in their own language.

- *'Have tutorials available in different languages on how to use computers and Internet.'*
- *'Learn how to use and search BCC libraries in different languages.'*

Social and recreation opportunities (5)

Five responses indicated a desire for information that would enable them to access recreation or social opportunities. A relatively strong identity as seniors emerges from these responses, and the desire for opportunities *with other seniors*.

- *'Seniors events.'*
- *'Sports and recreation for seniors.'*
- *'Information regarding different seniors' clubs.'*
- *'I would like to promote entertainments for older people.'*

- ‘Find about cultural events in Brisbane (especially free or “cheap” ones).’

Information about specific topics of interest (6)

This was, of course, very diverse. Participants identified desire for information about rights and obligations for seniors; history, geography, places and people of Brisbane and Australia; Australia’s flora and fauna; how to do arts in Brisbane; aboriginal arts and crafts; meditations (taichi etc); and fishing in Australia.

5. Accessing information about their country of origin

The capacity of the Internet to give them access to information about the country they have come from was considered important by the participants. The kinds of information that they would like to be able to get from the Internet was identified in two ways: in response to four examples provided; and in response to an invitation to articulate their own ideas.

In response to examples provided, nine said they would like access to *newspapers* in their country; 8 identified *recipes*; six *sports results* and 4 *political news*.

In response to an invitation to articulate their own ideas, 14 ideas were articulated. Analysis of these responses identifies three key areas of interest for seniors: culture, business, places of interest and other ideas.

Culture

- Culture of my country (Former Yugoslavia)
- History and art of my country (Former Yugoslavia)
- Cultural events and happenings
- Art and literature books

Business

- Information about import and export
- Real estate
- Import and exports

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

- Business and investments
- On line shopping

Places of interest

- Tourist informations (places of interest)
- Places to visit (places of interest) in my country

Other ideas

- Cross-words in my language
- News from my country
- Information about shair
- Education
- Pen pals registry

6. Information about other things

The kinds of information that they would like to be able to get about other things from the Internet was identified in two ways: in response to four examples provided; and in response to an invitation to articulate their own ideas.

In response to examples provided, all ten participants agreed with *Legal issues for seniors*, *Immigration*, and *Pensions*. Eight identified *Seniors card*.

In response to an invitation to articulate their own ideas, 7 ideas were articulated. Analysis of these responses identifies significant interest in law and entitlements.

Law and entitlements

- *'Centrelink.'*
- *'Access to welfare laws and entitlements.'*
- *'I believe people should be able to read all the laws and entitlements by themselves.'*

Other ideas

- *'Multilingual informations on any topic.'*
- *'Entertainment/things to do for seniors.'*
- *'Multicultural senior gatherings.'*

Summary of topics on which seniors identify the capacity of the Internet to give them access to information:

Brisbane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lifelong learning• social and recreation opportunities• information about topics of interest• what's happening in their own community
Country of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• culture• business• places of interest• newspapers• recipes
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• law and entitlements.

7. Experience of using the Internet.

Participants were asked to respond to questions about their experience of using the Internet, either drawing on previous experience, or the brief experience provided by the introductory workshop.

7.1 What do you enjoy about the Internet?

The things that participants' identified enjoying about the Internet were: access to information; news; and connection with others.

- *'Access to many different informations areas.'*

- *'It gives an opportunity of somehow "breaking the loneliness".'*

These responses indicate that the Internet may be experienced by senior net novices of non-English speaking backgrounds as an enjoyable solution to aspects of their lives that have been widely identified as problematic: lack of access to information; lack of opportunity for news of international events and in particular of events in their country of origin; and isolation.

7.2 What do you find difficult?

The things that senior net novices of NESB find difficult about the net are: 1. the fact that *'it is in English, and I don't speak English'*; and 2. their lack of knowledge and experience – *'I do not have enough experience of using computers/Internet'*.

One participant identified that simply *'using as mouse'* is difficult. Observers of the workshop noticed that some novice seniors were very awkward with the physical skill of manipulating the mouse, and showed hesitancy that seemed to be associated with unfamiliarity and uncertainty about the way that their manipulation on the mousepad was associated with movement on the screen. The ratio of participants to terminals for this workshop (groups of four seniors were clustered around one terminal) meant that the experience was not "hands-on". It was noted that it seems to be critical that introduction to the equipment be conducted with one person per terminal, so that novices get their hands on the mouse and are quickly immersed in the experiential learning of using it.

Others identified that finding the things that you want to look at is difficult – *'If you want something you can't find it, example from my country' ... 'Should be able to find names by only describing them'*.

Optimism and willingness to learn

Participants displayed optimism about their encounter with the unfamiliar Internet:

- *'I think it would not be very difficult to learn.'*
- *'Need more practice.'*
- *'It was not difficult for me.'*

They also demonstrated enthusiasm for further learning opportunities - *'I do need some more training on how to use computers and Internet'* – but also expressed their need for *'some Internet training available in my language'*.

7.3 How could it be made easier?

Participants identified four things that would make it easier for them to use the Internet:

Interim Report (January 2002)

Diverse Older People On-Line

- display available in different languages – *‘Opportunity to “surf” Internet in my language’ ... ‘The information should be in Spanish too’.*
- information and training on how to use the net available in different languages – *‘Access to Internet/computer usage training in my language’.*
- Easier access to computers – *‘To have a computer at home’.*
- Access to a teacher to accompany their learning - *‘To access with computer with the BCC teacher’ ... ‘To find someone to teach me, so I can practice’.*

7.4 Where could you go to use the Internet after you learn how to use it?

Most participants identified two options for ongoing access to a computer: the library (7) or home (5). Only one identified another alternative – *‘my friends home’*. Two were very clear that they would prefer to have access at home, and would be keen to get a computer with the support of a

- *‘At home, would like to be able to get computer throughout low repayments/interest free loans.’*
- *‘I would prefer at home if there is an opportunity to get computer through some sort of interest free loan with low repayments - maybe local and/or state governments should consider this?’*

One participant commented *‘There is one at home, but I don’t use it’.*

8. Feedback on the learning opportunity – the introduction to the Internet provided by BCC Librarian.

How useful was the training?

Seven participants responded to this question - two said the training was *‘excellent’* and five said it was *‘very useful’*. One elaborated that the social side of the gathering was also important – *‘meet each other, you don’t feel lonely, make yourself busy’.*

If you found the training helpful, what were the reasons?

Participants found the opportunity to learn helpful. Their comments include:

- *'Because it was explained better how the system works.'*
- *'I have learned that I can find better information.'*

If you found the training difficult, what were the reasons?

The presentation of Internet training in English, even with translators, is problematic for some senior net novices of NESB. Three commented that the training was difficult for reasons of language - *'They are in English, I speak Spanish'*.

How could the training be improved?

Participants made three suggestions to improve the training:

- conduct the training in their own language - *'I would like to have the tutorials in Spanish'*
- competent translation - *'making sure that translators know the material reasonably well'*
- Continuity – *'I would like to have more tutorials like this one' ... 'To continue and attend the tutorials'*.

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