

LEE LIMING
PROGRAMME IN
AGEING URBANISM

Smart Seniors for the Digital Age

Recreational Initiatives for Seniors¹

Penny Kong

Developing digital literacy in older Singaporeans is vital to ensure that no one gets left behind in the nation's drive to become a Smart Nation. In 2016, the Infocomm Development Authority partnered with the People's Association to offer information technology (IT) courses for seniors in 30 community clubs islandwide.

Social media use may have an impact on health and wellbeing for older adults. A landmark study published in 2014 by the University of Exeter, in the UK, showed multiple, positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes when older people were taught how to use social media. Participants, who were vulnerable older adults aged 60 to 95, gained an enhanced sense of self-competence and personal identity, increased socialisation, and improved cognitive capacity.

¹ This is an evolving database. We will be adding more examples and cases over time.

Similarly, a white paper by Gardner (2010) found that participants in the OATS computer-training programme reported several benefits after completing the training programme. These benefits included improved ability and confidence with computers and Internet technology; and a significant, positive increase in social connectedness, access to information, and social and civic participation.

Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) – New York City, New York, USA

OATS is a non-profit organisation which began in 2004. Their goal is to teach seniors how to use computers, enabling them to have more independent and connected lives. Courses cover topics such as how to use technology to improve personal health, finances, social engagement, learning or creative expression.

OATS is based in New York City and operates 24 technology labs in community settings across the city, serving over 20,000 people annually. They partner with government agencies, community-based organisations, national advocacy groups and major corporations. Funding comes from corporations, foundations and government sources, complemented by donations made in-kind.

Box 1 gives a sample of OATS partners and their programmes.

Box 1: OATS Partnership Programmes

- **New York Public Library** – offers a 6-session course for older adult library members.
- **Maimonides Medical Center** – developed a 3-month programme to install laptops in the homes of 24 frail seniors.
- **Capital One** – a collaboration with a bank to create an educational programme designed to encourage older adults to access online and mobile banking.

Source: Client Projects, <http://oats.org/client-projects/>, Accessed 24 April 2017.

Beyond the community-based technology labs, OATS operates two flagship programmes: the Senior Planet Exploration Center, and SeniorPlanet.org. Box 2 details the flagship programmes.

Box 2: OATS Flagship Programmes

Senior Planet Exploration Center

- A large, retail-level community space located in Manhattan's Chelsea neighbourhood.

- The Center is outfitted with the latest technology for mobile devices, internet access, collaborative training, digital photography, special events, and film screenings.
- Special events include workshops, talks, and social and cultural events.
- Other facilities include computer stations, a communal project work table, a video chat nook, and a lounge area with sofas and gaming systems.
- The Center also hosts 5- and 10-week digital technology courses for seniors.

SeniorPlanet.org

- An online counterpart to the Exploration Center.
- Provides informative and provocative daily content around the theme “ageing with attitude”.
- Publishes a popular daily events calendar with a curation of senior-friendly activities.

Source: Flagship Programmes, <http://oats.org/flagship-programs/>, Accessed 24 April 2017.

Box 3 introduces OATS’ digital technology courses for seniors.

Box 3: OATS Digital Technology Courses

- Twice weekly sessions over 5 or 10 weeks
- Aimed at seniors aged 60 and above

- Courses include:

Computer Basics for Older Adults – Teaches the basics of operating a computer and navigating the Internet. Participants learn to use email, perform online searches, access entertainment and how to connect to people.

iPad Basics for Older Adults – Teaches participants how to use the iPad to access the internet, use email, download apps, watch videos and take pictures, among others.

Ready, Set, Bank: Online Banking Made Easy – Teaches seniors how to navigate mobile banking apps, set up alerts about account activity and enrol in government financial programmes for seniors.

Source: Courses, <https://seniorplanet.org/senior-planet-nyc/current-classes/>, Accessed 24 April 2017.

Seniors for Smart Nation – Singapore

The Seniors for Smart Nation course is taught by People’s Association IT trainers at 50 community clubs islandwide. The courses on offer have four main areas of focus:

- I-Connect: how to use social media tools
- I-Inno: the latest trends in online communications and leisure hobbies

- I-Office: how to use Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint
- I-Lifestyle: how to use technology to pursue personal interests or set up online businesses

A recent addition is a digital photography course which instructs seniors on basic point-and-shoot photography and creative post-processing. The cost of enrolment in these courses starts from S\$10 for Singaporean residents aged 50 and over.

Silver Infocomm Initiative – Singapore

Courses in the Silver Infocomm Initiative cover more than 20 topics and are designed to provide step-by-step guidance in either English or Mandarin. Fees are charged beginning at \$5-10 per training hour. Seniors can visit nine learning hubs, called Silver Infocomm Junctions, located across the nation. These are senior-friendly spaces where older adults can participate in the abovementioned courses.

Since November 2007, more than 80,000 older adults have been trained. Some early graduates of the programme have come back as trainers to guide their peers. There are two tracks in the Silver Infocomm Curriculum, which is designed to increase infocomm literacy.

Box 4 introduces the Silver Infocomm curriculum.

Box 4: Silver Infocomm Curriculum

iBEGIN

- Covers basic computer skills on computers and mobile devices.
- Participants learn how to use a computer, surf the internet, create emails, send IMs, make video calls, and how to protect themselves online.

iLIVE

- Covers intermediate digital lifestyle skills.
- Participants learn how to carry out transactions for online shopping, e-travel, government e-services, internet banking, and related security practices. They also learn about digital photo/video management, e-entertainment, blogging and navigation.

Source: Silver Infocomm Curriculum, <https://www.imda.gov.sg/community/consumer-education/digital-inclusion/silver-infocomm-initiative/silver-infocomm-curriculum>, Accessed 24 April 2017.

An intensive programme called the Intergen IT Bootcamp is aimed at adults aged 50 and above. The programme is a collaboration with schools and community partners. Since it began in 2010, over 140 Bootcamps have been conducted, training close to 3,000 seniors on

infocomm skills. The collaboration provides seniors with the opportunity to interact with their grandchildren or students from neighbouring schools, while gaining basic skills in infocomm.

SAGE Active Ageing Centre – Hong Kong

The SAGE Active Ageing Centre began offering a computer learning programme in October 2010. They aim to provide opportunities for older adults to enjoy the benefits and advantages of digital technology by providing courses and an accessible venue for IT learning. Most courses are subsidised and are customised to older adults at different learning levels.

To facilitate these ambitions, the Centre conducts courses in a classroom where participants use computers with 20-inch touchscreen monitors to learn computer basics. A Cyber Café provides a relaxed and comfortable venue for seniors to gather and socialise. The Café also offers complimentary computer equipment loans, where seniors can borrow laptops, tablets or digital tablets. Other facilities include free WiFi and a magazine and book collection on IT and digital photography topics.

SeniorNet – USA

SeniorNet is a non-profit with the mission to provide older adults with education and access to computer technologies in order to enhance their lives and enable knowledge-sharing. Since 1986, they have reached over 2 million older adults aged 50 and over.

SeniorNet works by supporting Learning Centers throughout the US. They do so in two ways. Firstly, they develop an extensive curriculum and other instructional materials for use in the Learning Centers. The Learning Centers are housed in locations such as senior centres, community centres, public libraries, schools, clinics and hospitals. Each provides about 6 to 10 computers for learners. Secondly, SeniorNet collaborates in research on older adults and technology.

Seniors sign up for membership to gain access to their local SeniorNet Learning Center, where they can take classes. Membership fees cost US\$44 for the first year, and US\$33 for each year thereafter. Learning Centers charge a separate fee for each course. The guided, hands-on courses instruct seniors on:

- Basic computer skills
- Digital photography
- Internet and email
- Online shopping
- Avoiding scams

- How to use the latest technology, such as the iPhone, iPad, smartwatches, and FitBit

Additionally, the SeniorNet website provides information on interactive opportunities, e-commerce and other resources on specific areas of concern and interest to the older adult population.

Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA) – Australia

The ASCCA was first incorporated as an association in 1998 and became a non-profit in 2001. They organise seminars, training sessions, workshops and activities geared towards helping seniors explore and use computer technology. There is also an annual two-day conference open to all seniors. Topics cover a variety of areas related to information technology and communication.

Some functions of the Association include developing course materials for use by computer clubs and assisting communities in establishing computer clubs for seniors. Member clubs gain access to resources from the Association such as:

- Training materials, advice on computer topics and techniques and support
- Software and hardware, such as refurbished computers
- Competitions organised by the Association

Other than providing education and events, the ASCCA works with the government regarding policy issues that affect information communication technology and seniors.

Barclays Digital Eagles – UK

This free service was originally a training initiative by Barclays to build a more tech-savvy workforce within the company. The programme works by training Digital Eagles to pass on their knowledge to more Digital Eagles. Barclays agreed to send Digital Eagles to daycare centres and care homes run by Friends of the Elderly when the latter approached them.

Friends of the Elderly is a national charity in the UK which provides daycare and support for older people. It found in a pilot study that tablet computers benefited older people, especially those with dementia. Tablet computers were found to be more accessible than personal computers to older people due to their smaller size and portability.

Box 5 shares information about two programmes offered by Barclays.

Box 5: Barclays Digital Eagles

Tea and Teach

- Free sessions held across the UK in Barclays branches, libraries, or local community centres.

- The programmes are targeted at those over 65 who wish to learn how to use their smart devices.
- During each session, senior participants receive guidance on how to use computers and the internet.

DigiSafe in Cyber Space

- The programme was added to teach participants how to secure their devices and stay safe online.
- Sessions include interactive activities sharing practical advice on topics such as social media privacy, advice on pop-ups and how to recognise fraudulent emails.

Source: *The rise of silver surfers*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/finance/your-bank/10890358/tablet-training-for-seniors.html>, Accessed 11 May 2017

Participants who have gone through the Digital Eagles programme share how they use tablets in their care facility. At one day centre, tablets are used in reminiscence therapy where elderly residents can digitally revisit their hometowns through Google Earth, or watch film footage of dance halls in the 50s.

Sources:

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elderly in social media improves well-being, combats isolation,

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/12/141212111649.htm>, Accessed 12 May 2017; P J Gardner (2010) *Older Adults and OATS Computer Training Programs: A Social Impact Analysis Findings Report* (white paper), <http://oats.org/white-papers/older-adults-and-oats-computer-training-programs-a-social-impact-analysis-findings-report/>, Accessed 12 May 2017; *Helping Seniors Learn New Technology*, <https://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/03/helping-seniors-learn-new-technology/>, Accessed 20 March 2017; OATS – Older Adults Technology Services, <http://oats.org/>, Accessed 24 April 2017; *Seniors for Smart Nation*, https://www.pa.gov.sg/Our_Programmes/Lifeskills_and_Lifestyle/Seniors_for_Smart_Nation, Accessed 24 April 2017; *Silver InfoComm Initiative*, <https://www.imda.gov.sg/sii>, Accessed 5 May 2017; *SAGE Active Ageing Centre*, <http://www.sage.org.hk/Service/UnitServe/selffinCenter/aacCenter.aspx?lang=en-US>, Accessed 12 May 2017; *SeniorNet*; <http://www.seniornet.org/>; Accessed 5 May 2017; *ASCCA – Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association*; <http://www.ascca.org.au>, Accessed 5 May 2017; *The rise of silver surfers*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/finance/your-bank/10890358/tablet-training-for-seniors.html>, Accessed 11 May 2017; *Tea and Teach*, <https://events.uk.barclays/teaandteach>, Accessed 11 May 2017.