

A Place for us? Baby Boomers, Their Elders, and the Public Library

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Abstract

Canada's aging population is expected to have an impact on all public institutions; for public libraries, the emergence of a large, multi-generational user group of older adults challenges the current paradigm of services to seniors. This thesis examines a subset of this user group: baby boomer library patrons who are in a caring relationship with elders. It investigates how these patrons interact with the public library both for themselves, and as carers, in order to reveal library-related issues particular to this growing segment of the population. The study takes place within a conceptual framework derived from the ethic of care, and from emerging theories of library-as-place rooted in the fields of human geography and sociology. Using a qualitative instrumental case study method, long form interviews were conducted with respondents recruited through theoretical sampling extended by snowball sampling. While not generalizable, findings suggest that while these baby boomer respondents value their libraries deeply, there is potential to create services and practices more attuned to the needs of older adults who are in relationships with elders.

Résumé

On prévoit que le vieillissement de la population canadienne aura un impact sur toutes les institutions publiques; pour les bibliothèques publiques, l'émergence d'un grand groupe d'utilisateurs multigénérationnel composé d'adultes plus âgés met en question le paradigme actuel des services aux personnes âgées. Dans la présente thèse, nous examinons un sous-ensemble de ce groupe d'utilisateurs : les *baby-boomers* qui fréquentent la bibliothèque et qui prennent soin de personnes âgées. Nous étudions la façon dont ces utilisateurs interagissent avec la bibliothèque, à des fins personnelles et comme aidants, afin de soulever les problèmes des bibliothèques qui sont particuliers à ce segment grandissant de la population. L'étude est effectuée dans un cadre conceptuel dérivé de l'éthique des soins et des théories émergentes de la « bibliothèque comme lieu » qui sont encrées dans les domaines de la géographie humaine et de la sociologie. En ayant recours à une étude de cas instrumentale qualitative, de longues entrevues ont été menées au sein des répondants sélectionnés au moyen d'un échantillonnage théorique élargi par un sondage en boule de neige. Bien qu'elles ne soient pas généralisables, les conclusions suggèrent que malgré que les *baby-boomers* qui ont participé à l'enquête apprécient énormément leurs bibliothèques, il est possible de mettre en place des services et des pratiques qui répondent mieux aux besoins des adultes plus âgés qui côtoient des aînés.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

1.1 Defining the Problem

A recognized demographic phenomenon of post-WW2 is known as the baby boom and represents a population cohort now moving into the later stages of the human lifespan; the first wave of this demographic cohort will achieve a retiring age of 65 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2007b). As boomers confront the landscape of this life chapter, they find they are not alone. Although much smaller in numbers, parents of this cohort, older adults themselves, are experiencing longer life and thus represent yet another older cohort. The 2006 census found that seniors 85 and older are the fastest growing segment of the over-65 population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). For many baby boomers, then, their own experience of aging often includes the experience of providing care to someone older than they are, and in doing so, baby boomers find themselves addressing both their own, and their elders' needs (Duxbury, Higgins, & Schroeder, 2009; Joseph, 2006; Kahlert, 2000; Vanier Institute for the Family, 2010). For public libraries whose mission is to serve all citizens, the user group known as "seniors" is more loosely defined. The American Library Association (2008) sets the age range for older adult services as one defined by those who are 55 years and older; the Canadian Library Association (2009) defines older adults as those aged 60 years and older. Both groups recognize that the aging of the population and the lengthening of life spans call for adjustments in how this burgeoning population is to be served. Moreover, concern has been raised that "the current paradigm of library services for 'seniors' does not match the characteristics and potential contributions of the baby boomer generation" (American Libraries Council-ALC and Institute of Museum and Library Services-IMLS, 2005, p.7) now flooding into the older adult population.

1.2 Background to the Problem

Australian demographer Bernard Salt has commented,

The boomers have notched up many 'firsts': first protest generation; first women's rights generation; first generation to change sexual mores. But there's a new first they're just discovering. The generation born in the late 1940s and the '50s is the first to witness their parents' progress into frail old age" (as cited in Joseph, 2009, p. 115).

In Canada, the aging population is a result of a falling fertility rate and an increase in the life expectancy of Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2007a); the Special Senate report on Aging, *Canada's Aging Population: Seizing the Opportunity*, describes this as a shift in "the historical balance between young and old" (Canada, 2009, p. 2).

To the 'older adult' demographic - 65 years and over - poised to make up a quarter of the Canadian population within 30 years (Statistics Canada, 2010a), any organization offering programs and services to this population needs to address a broad spectrum of values, expectations, needs, and abilities. Clearly there is no uniform application of the phrase 'older adult.' While some overlap has been identified between the generations that make up older adults, boomers are expected to move into this category with some significantly different needs and attitudes from the generation that preceded theirs (Williamson, Bannister, & Sullivan, 2010).

Some service implications for an aging population have been noted in Library and Information Studies (LIS) literature (e.g., ALC & IMLS, 2005; Joseph, 2006; Williamson, Bannister, Makin, Schauder, & Sullivan, 2006). Both policy makers and professionals recognize that services to this cohort will need to address both a healthy, active population of baby boomers who are likely to change the very definition of aging itself (Canada, 2009, p. 3), as well as a growing population of frail elderly who will have increased needs for homebound services and adaptive technologies (Joseph, 2006).

At the same time as the demographic shift is taking place, the technological revolution poses fundamental questions for libraries about their place in the digital world. The very premise of physical libraries has come into question (Kay, 2009; Vavrek, 2005). Finding the appropriate balance between the physical place of library buildings existing in geographical space, and the construction of rich online environments for their patrons, to say nothing of other types of outreach services, is an ongoing challenge for institutions. Boomers are avid users of technology, but “study after study of user preferences and patterns reveals adults’ continuing demand for physical venues” (Gosling, as cited in Schull, 2010, p. 79). This tension between the physical and the virtual has been one impetus behind a recent focus for scholarly research into library as place (e.g., Audunson, 2005; Buschman & Leckie, 2006; Given & Leckie, 2003; May & Black, 2010; McKechnie, 2004; Most, 2009). This body of research provides a rich conceptual framework for subsequent studies of user experience offering as it does multiple perspectives on a single issue. This study builds on this framework.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Building on the recognition that the “current paradigm of library services for ‘seniors’ does not match the characteristics ... of the baby boomer generation” (ALC & IMLS, 2005), and on the awareness of the multi-generational nature of the older adult cohort, this thesis explores how baby boomer library patrons who are in a relationship of care with elders actually use the public library, broaching the question of what unique needs this user group might bring to the library experience. This study considers what a caring relationship implies for public library use. By situating this use in a library-as-place framework, this thesis considers what insights into these users’ experience may be afforded by this area of interest in LIS scholarship.

1.4 Defining the Research

The broad aim of this study is to add to our understanding of what the multi-generational nature of the aging population might imply for the ongoing relevancy of public library services. Through this prism of one dimension of multi-generational experience, the caring relationship, the purpose of this study is to examine the behaviour, characteristics, and needs of members of a growing segment of the population as its members interact with the public library¹, both to meet their own needs, and to support their caring relationship with elders. This investigation contributes to LIS scholarship by presenting and interpreting the experiences of a small sample of members of this user group, and based on this description/profile, by pinpointing specific issues that require further investigation.

1.5 Research Questions

The literature surrounding library use and the aging population, as well as the growing body of library-as-place scholarship inform the development of the research questions for this study. These questions address the unique character of this contemporary boomer cohort, specifically in their relationships with the elders with whom they interact and are posed as follows:

1. How do baby boomer public library users who provide care to elders interact with the public library?
2. How do these users experience the library as a place?
3. What library use characteristics and behaviours of this user group suggest opportunities for further investigation?

¹ This study takes place in a large Canadian city with a multi-branch public library system. The city and its library system are referenced generically as 'city' and 'library' to protect the anonymity of study participants.

1.6 Methodology

A qualitative research paradigm is appropriate for studies that aim to explore subjective experience. In order to address the experiences of baby boomer library patrons in a caring relationship with elders, an instrumental case study approach (Stake, 2000) is employed. Stake calls a case study “instrumental” when it facilitates insight into an external interest (p. 445). While the research concern is for the case itself “qualitative case researchers orient to complexities connecting ordinary practice in natural habitats to a few abstractions and concerns of the academic disciplines....a tension exists” (Stake, p. 448). In this study, the experiences of the respondents as portrayed in their words are framed by the concepts of ethic of care and the public library-as-place, allowing the researcher to contextualize findings within developing theoretical models of this current area of study in LIS.

Seven participants were recruited by theoretical sampling and extended by “snowball” sampling and participated in long-form qualitative interviews. This approach was chosen for its ability to return rich data (Rubin, 2005) and allows exploration of the research questions in detail. This methodological choice of long form qualitative interviewing also builds on the extensive prior experience of the researcher as a broadcast producer. Reflection guides (Appendix D) were used as memory aids for subsequent relevant observations; follow-up interviews or e-mail communication took place within four to six weeks following these initial interviews. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher followed by iterative textual analysis of the thematic content of the interviews and ongoing memo-keeping throughout the period of study. The small sample size and short period of study enabled the researcher to conduct manual sorting and coding of all data.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, key terms are defined as follows. Baby boomers are defined as those born between 1946 and 1964 (Statistics Canada, 2007b). For the purposes of this study, elders are defined as those individuals who are at least 10 years older than baby boomer respondents. This minimum difference of a decade was established to increase the likelihood of differences in life experience and technology use. Carers are defined as those who self-identify as people who provided care and/or companionship to an elder. The ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982) is a model of behaviour that considers the highest moral imperative to be taking care of the needs of, and sustaining relationships with others and is used to frame caring in this study of library use. The library as place is defined first as “the library as a physical, social, and intellectual place within the hearts and minds of its clientele and the public at large” (Buschman & Leckie, 2006, p.4). A typology of five dimensions including locale, associations, experience, space and symbolism (Schull, 2010) further narrows this definition.²

1.8 Scope and Limitations of Study

This case study was undertaken as an unfunded master’s level research project in the School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa. This study was originally proposed as a two part investigation that would include both baby boomer interviews and a Delphi study to discuss implications of the interview findings with library professionals and with public policy professionals with an interest in the aging population. However, the decision to increase the number of interview respondents to create more robust data required greater time commitments for interviews, transcription, and analysis, which in turn led to a decision to drop the Delphi section. An expanded study might additionally have included

² Throughout this thesis these conceptual frameworks as articulated by Gilligan (1982) and Buschman & Leckie (2006) will be referenced as ethic of care and library-as-place, respectively.

interviews with the elders, and with non-user baby boomers, as well as incorporating participant-observer methodology, as described in 1.6 above.

1.9 Outline

This thesis has been organized as follows: Chapter One provides the background to the problem, and states the questions the study has been designed to answer. Chapter Two is contextual, introducing the demographic backdrop to the study, and a summary of existing literature that addresses aspects of the research problem. It also provides the conceptual framework for the study, rooted in the ethic of care and in the evolving framework of library-as-place. Chapter Three discusses the methodology used for the study, including its limitations. Chapter Four describes relevant characteristics of the participants in the research study. Chapter Five outlines the study's findings in terms of the conceptual frameworks of caring and of place. Chapter Six summarizes the research, considers how it addresses the posed research questions, and offers a critique of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

The context for the current study is demographic change. Figures from the 2006 Canadian census show these aging trends: more seniors, fewer children; an increase in the median age, an increase in the average age of seniors, and rapid aging of the working age population. The aging of the population is attributed to two factors: a fertility rate that is below the replacement level, and an increase in life expectancy. More Canadians are reaching 65, and once someone reaches 65, they are likely to live longer (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

The baby boom generation remains the largest among seven cohorts defined by Statistics Canada (2007b). A generation that has already had an enormous impact on the social and political behaviour of its era is likely, as it ages, to have an effect on how aging itself is defined (Senate, 2009). While projections for public pension plans, health care costs, and the availability of needed caregivers are some of the issues public policy analysts are concerned with (Echenberg, Gauthier, & Léonard, 2011), library futurists, too, are wondering what the implications of the massive greying of the population will be for these institutions (e.g., Joseph, 2006; Kahlert, 2000; Williamson et al., 2006). This dramatic demographic shift is the backdrop to the current study, situated at the intersection of scholarly and professional interest in the impact of the aging population on library services on the one hand, and a growing number of studies that are investigating library-as-place, on the other. This section begins with an overview of the demographic context and then provides a selective review of literature that informs this research problem.

2.2 The Demographic Context

Based on assumptions about fertility, life expectancy, and migration, Statistics Canada projects that between 2009 and 2036, “the aging of the population [will] accelerate rapidly, as the entire baby boom generation turns 65 during this period. The number of senior citizens could more than double, outnumbering children for the first time” (Statistics Canada, 2010a). Another measure of the aging population is median age: by 2036, “the median age of the population would range between 42 and 45 years, compared with the current median of 39.5” (Statistics Canada, 2010b). The very old are living longer also, adding another generation to the human lifespan, increasing from roughly 1.3 million people aged 80 or over in 2009, to 3.3 million by 2036, with the number of centenarians projected to triple or quadruple, from about 6,000 in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010b).

One of the implications of this demographic shift is a growing need for caregivers to assist aging adults. Public policy analysts are recognizing that care-giving activities are falling largely to middle-aged women, often family members, some of whom balance care for elders, care for children and full-time employment (Duxbury et al., 2009; Echenberg et al., 2011). According to the Vanier Institute of the Family (2010), more than 29% of women aged 45 to 54 years are “carers” to at least one.

2.3 Public Libraries and the Aging Population: Scholarly Literature

Australia, like Canada, is facing a massive demographic shift and has been the site of much research and professional literature on this topic (e.g., Joseph, 2006; Joseph, 2009; Kahlert, 2000; Williamson, 2009). Kahlert (2000) addresses the implication of longer life spans:

From a generational standpoint public libraries will be supporting the needs of two aging generations, those born in the late 1920s, 1930s (the older generation) and the baby boomer aged. These are two diverse generations with diametrically opposed values, attitudes and

expectations, which as a combined force will place significant demands on services and resources...together these two groups will pose a real challenge... as they both compete for very diverse services. (The Burning Question section, para. 4)

Williamson et al. (2010), however, observes that there may be crossover in characteristics and values between boomers and the older generation, although there are enough differences that “the retirement of the Baby boomers requires innovative responses on the part of Public Libraries” (p. 188).

A series of studies (Williamson et al., 2006; Williamson, Bannister, & Sutherland, 2010), has investigated the characteristics of baby boomers, and what impact their aging might have on Australian public libraries. One set of study participants (Williamson et al., 2010) expects boomer patrons to be more demanding and assertive, cranky about their own inevitable aging-related health issues, uncertain about post-work activity, and possibly in a precarious financial position. Their attitudes towards technology include a fear of being marginalized and left behind, a strong attachment to books, a desire to access a wide variety of information in as many formats as possible, and an expectation that libraries could serve as places to meet social needs and to be a destination for volunteerism. The characteristics and needs of boomers involved with caring or care-giving, and what the potential impact on libraries might be, however, are not addressed.

Informed by the 1999 version of *the ALA Guidelines for Library Services to Older Adults*, North American researchers (Piper, Palmer & Xie, 2009) note a lack of specifically targeted programs, and gaps in services and leadership opportunities for older adults, but also note that older adult study participants are generally satisfied nevertheless. Their findings indicate “these older adults put more value on a kind and helpful environment than they do on services and programs geared toward older adults” (Piper et al., p. 116). Decker (2010) focuses on the changing social, programming, and technological needs that nimble library services could address in order to retain engagement of older adults. Libraries will need to address issues of accessibility and comfort, and should provide spatial arrangements that allow for social interaction. “In a society that has emphasized the need to

accommodate citizens with disabilities and special needs, the attention given to the physical space needs of the aging population seems incongruently minimal” (Decker, p. 606). Libraries instead should “create designated ‘older adult’ sections just as there is a ‘children’s section’ and further notes that many are also witnessing their own parents’ decline in old age and are caring for them”(p. 615). This recognition of inter-generational concerns speaks to the rationale for the current study, suggesting the need to better understand the requirements of the carer segment of the aging population.

2.4 Public Libraries and the Aging Population: Professional Literature

In recent policy statements, both the American Library Association (ALA) and the Canadian Library Association (CLA) have addressed the need to reorient older adult services. The *Canadian Guidelines on Library and Information Services for Older Adults (2009)* note that the term “older adults” encompasses “several generations with different life experiences and different sets of expectations.” The guidelines also acknowledge the large numbers of aging baby boomers, and recognizes within this user group, common experiences of retirement, increased leisure, the need to re-structure daily life, and the onset of age-related physical conditions. The authors further warn that the over-65 age category is currently under-represented among library users. Therefore, the effect of an increase in this group as a proportion of the population without addressing their under-representation predicts “a serious impact on our libraries, and how the public views the importance of the library.” The *Guidelines* themselves comprise a comprehensive and detailed list of actions libraries can take to ensure libraries meet the needs of aging individuals, and are similar to the ALA’s *Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults (2008)*.

Important and highly relevant to this study is Australia’s recent strategic planning report (Joseph, 2006) which examines the potential impact for libraries of a greatly increased proportion of

older people in local communities. This report is valuable because it provides a complete legislative and policy framework for development of services to an aging population. This framework situates this service at all jurisdictional levels from international human rights to local decision-making by addressing: adherence to UN principles for older persons and national human rights legislation, meeting needs articulated in policy developed by the federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, working within the New South Wales healthy aging framework developed by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Aging, as well as meeting provisions of numerous local government acts and plans. The report also notes the multi-generational nature of the aging population, and points out that while the boomer age wave will emphasize providing appropriate services to active aging adults, the population of very elderly is also growing, an age group

...characterised by higher dependency, increased disability and a greater need for support services to maintain independence and quality of life. The impact on libraries will be an increased demand for many of the services currently provided for seniors and clients with disabilities; including home library services, book delivery, large print, technology for low vision, hearing aid loops in meeting rooms and talking books (p. 22).

This report considers the need for the built environment to be designed to be age-friendly, including “transgenerational design” which takes into account age-related impairments and limitations, and “universal design” which, as much as possible, limits the need for adaptation or specialization to meet diverse abilities (p. 35).

Importantly for the current study, this Australian paper recognizes that the number of carers is likely to increase as the population ages, and “many carers will also be part of the aging cohort themselves” (p. 23), which could lead to increased demands on libraries for such services as meeting the information needs of carers, and expanding housebound library services to include carers. This recognition suggests an opportunity for further investigation of carers' library activities and needs.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

2.5.1 Conceptual framework: ethic of care.

The guiding research question for this thesis addresses baby boomer library patrons who are in caring relationships with elders. Caring, for the purposes of this study, is framed by the “ethic of care,” (Gilligan, 1982) further elaborated to interpret women’s use of public space (Day, 2000). The ethic of care is “a model of moral development in which the highest moral imperative requires taking care of needs and sustaining relationships” (Gilligan, 1982, as cited in Day, p. 104). The ethic of care posits a decision-making model based on sustaining relationships rather than an ‘ethic of justice’ model based on fairness, autonomy and respect for others’ rights. The former does not supersede the latter: “According to Gilligan and others, morality should ideally encompass both caring and justice” (Gilligan, in Day, p. 105). The ethic of care is not meant to describe a mode of behaviour that is only used by women, but that women’s socialization predicts a greater likelihood of women participating in, and valuing caregiving, and defining themselves in the context of their relationships to others (p. 105). The ethic of care frames women’s use and perception of public space: “Possibilities arising from women's public space activity can easily be identified in the context of the ethic of care. Possibilities include opportunities for practicing and receiving caring, and for sustaining relationships with friends, family, strangers, and public spaces “(Day, 2000, p. 110). The implications of adopting an ethic of care in regards to public spaces include focusing decisions on specific circumstances of groups of users, location, and political situation, as well as universal principles and standards, in order to determine the most caring course of action. Further, the author proposes that “decisions regarding public spaces should accept responsibility for helping to maintain relationships. Rather than addressing discrete ‘user groups,’ design and design research should regard people as connected and should strive to make decisions that leave no-one out” (p. 119).

2.5.2 Conceptual framework: library-as-place.

Library-as-place enables researchers to better understand how library patrons actually use and value the libraries in their lives. Out of research-based ‘place studies’ grounded in geography and in social and cultural studies (Most, 2009, p.6), library-as-place has emerged as an idea that recognizes the multi-dimensionality of the user experience, an experience composed of physical sensation, memories, expectations, identity construction, ideological perspectives. As a way to consider the library-as-place for an aging population, this approach offers “an ecological perspective, including how the library interacts with other elements of its environment and what distinguishes it within that environment” (Schull , 2010, p. 79).

The movement to study library-as-place gained momentum as researchers shifted their perspective “from studying the roles of the user in the life of the library” to “the roles of the library in the life of the user” (Most, 2009, p. 28). Two studies of urban central libraries (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) which were replicated later (May & Black, 2010; Most, 2009) investigate how people use libraries and how they feel about their libraries as places. Other research uses this library-as-place framework in various ways: to study the intersection of physical and virtual place (Aabo, 2005; Audunson, 2005); to examine the relevance of the concept of Third Place to libraries (Harris, 2003; Lawson, 2004; Fisher, Saxton, Edwards, & Mai, 2007); to examine how public libraries manifest the concept of the Habermasian public sphere (Alstad & Curry, 2003; Leckie & Buschman, 2007), and finally to study whether in their physical presence, libraries generate social capital (Johnson & Griffis, 2009).

One approach LIS researchers have taken is to explore which theories and typologies from this human geography domain of ‘place studies’ are particularly useful as a way of understanding the value of the physical spaces in public libraries. Two studies illustrate this approach and offer relevant theoretical insights to the current study of the experiences of baby boomer carers (Fisher, Saxton, Edwards & Mai, 2007; McKenzie, Prigoda, Clement, & McKechnie, 2007).

A study of the functioning of the Seattle Public Library tested two such frameworks. First, researchers applied definitions from Oldenburg's "Third Place" concept: informal places other than home or work, which are sites of public life, made up of "a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, R. as cited in Most, p.48). Secondly, they applied Cresswell's five component framework: location, locale, sense of place, space (a more abstract concept than "place") and landscape (Fisher et al., 2007, p. 138). The authors determined that only some of Oldenburg's criteria for a "third place" were borne out by the Seattle Central Library: the library was "neutral ground," it levelled differences of class and other social categories, and it provided a "home away from home" (p. 152). The authors also found Cresswell's definition of place to be a useful lens. However, neither of these perspectives account for information-seeking and use. Among the emerging themes in the Seattle study, is "a deep recognition of the importance of information and education... and also ... a high social value placed on learning," (Fisher et al., p. 149). The authors further propose adding informational space to the mix, to include "all themes regarding information finding and seeking, reading, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment" (Fisher et al., p. 153). Finally, an emerging theory of informational places is now recognized and provides "a useful framework for understanding many of the roles...libraries play as place"(Most, p. 238).

The second study of 'place theory' relevant to the current work reports on social relations in a particular area of a public library building (McKenzie et al., 2007). Lofland's (1998) framework of social realms and Day's (2000) use of the ethic of care together ground a study of the public library's program room as social space. Lofland conceptualizes "realms" as private, parochial, or public, according to the relational activity that occurs within them. This perspective contextualizes the finding that the library's program room as a realm is transformed according to how people use it (McKenzie et al., 2007). The ethic of care perspective supports a recognition that the program room space in the library becomes a

site “for the enactment of women’s identities and the performance of caring” (McKenzie et al., p. 126). The finding that “women’s experience of public space frequently involve(s) giving or receiving care or reinforcing relationships with friends and family” (McKenzie et al., p. 126) invites further study. The study notes that by attending to relationships “among library users, between users and staff, and between users and the library space” researchers are freed “to reconceptualise both library use and information practices in entirely new ways” (McKenzie et al., 2007, p. 131).

Schull (2010) considers what place study theories can contribute to an understanding of how libraries evolve in the face of massive demographic change. In focusing on place in the digital age, “study after study of user preferences and patterns reveals adults’ continuing demand for physical venues” (Gosling, as cited in Schull, p. 79), and evidence supporting active older adults’ need for expansion of meeting and learning spaces (p. 80) is also provided.

As noted in section 1.7, five dimensions of place relevant to library preparation for an aging society are location, individual associations, experiential, spatial, and symbolic and are described in further detail as follows:

- a) **Locale:** the library as a place within its community context is a function of factors such as its location and accessibility as a community institution, as well as how it fits into the community’s public and commercial infrastructure.
- b) **Individual associations:** the memories, assumptions, preconceptions - or lack thereof- that individuals bring to their library use have bearing on what kind of place they perceive it to be.
- c) **Experiential dimensions:** older adults have common needs for places that are social (reducing isolation); educational (offering lifelong learning); transitional (providing information and assistance with significant life changes); informational (meeting increasing demand for relevant

topics and themes); and cultural (hosting opportunities for cultural appreciation and participation).

- d) Spatial dimensions: aspects of the physical environment are relevant, such as separate space vs. age-integrated spaces, furniture design, and amenities; these are issues that relate to “the look or feel of libraries in the age of longevity” (Schull, p. 90).
- e) The library’s symbolic value: this considers the library as, among others, an essential community institution, a public commons, and/or an instrument of democratic participation.

These five dimensions of place provide a working definition of library as place through the interview process. Consideration of these attributes of place ensures that future models of adult public library service will contribute to positive aging.

2.6 Conclusion

Information about the demographic shift and the literature this shift has inspired make it clear that the numbers of carers and caregivers in the population is already large and will continue to grow. Within LIS literature, there is an acknowledgement of the multi-generational nature of the older adult cohort and the presence of carers within that cohort. Although there has been some speculation as to what this might imply for library services (Joseph, 2006), there has been little investigation of the actual experiences of this group of library users. This study addresses that gap in a preliminary and exploratory way. Because it offers such a broad range of perspectives with which to interpret lived experience, including approaches that apply the ethic of care to the consideration of public places, library-as-place is the guiding theoretical frame for this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction and Research Design Summary

This research project takes the form of a case study of the lived experience of a particular group of library users, seven baby boomers each of whom is in a caring relationship with one or more elders. Through the method of qualitative long-form interviewing, it explores how these individuals experience the public library in their lives. This case study belongs to the instrumental case study category (Stake, 2000, p. 445), in which “a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization...it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case still is looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest” (p. 445). The external interest which contextualizes this case can be characterized as an interest in the implications for public libraries of an aging population characterized by a multi-generational older adult cohort. The particular case is investigated so as to provide further insight into an aspect of this larger interest. “We simultaneously have several interests, particular and general” (p. 445).

Questions which seek to understand human experience in its specificity and its diversity are well suited to a constructivist research paradigm in which meaning is derived from individually or socially constructed experience (Williamson, 2006). This paradigm is used in LIS research, for example, “to understand how the various participants in a particular age cohort construct perceptions of their world,” (Williamson et al., 2006). The qualitative methods and tools for this study produce a rich and detailed portrayal of phenomena of interest, rather than necessarily producing statistically significant results (Canadian Institute of Health Research, 2010, p. 137). The questions this study addresses could have been approached through different paradigms and methodology, such as a mixed methods design. Mixed methods integrate qualitative methods and quantitative tools such as surveys and

questionnaires. Such mixed method designs have been used in recent studies of library as place (e.g., May & Black 2010; Most, 2009) to produce comprehensive and complementary data with opportunities for generalizing that qualitative methods alone may not provide. Within a qualitative paradigm alone, it might have been fruitful to add categories to the theoretical sampling criteria in order to include a broader range of participants, such as more paid carers, more employed baby boomers, and/or more respondents involved in day to day functional care with elders. However, this study was bounded by practical considerations of time and resources.

This study employs a semi-structured long-form interview approach to investigate the experience of seven baby boomer public library patrons who are involved in care of elders. The goal of this method of data collection is “to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying it in the words of the interviewees and through actual events and to make that complexity understandable to others” (Rubin, 2005, p. 202). When interviewing from a qualitative perspective, the actors, interviewer and respondent, produce meaning together. The interview is “an occasion for purposefully animated participants to construct versions of reality interactionally rather than merely purvey data (Gubrium, 2002, p. 14). Interviewing in this view is “a concerted interactional project. Working within the interview itself, subjects are fleshed out, rationally and emotionally, in relation to the give-and take of the interview process, the interview's research purposes, and its surrounding social contexts” (Gubrium, 2002, p. 15). “The interview unfolds reflexively as each participant looks at the world through the other’s eyes, incorporating both self and other into the process of interpretation” (Warren, 2002, p. 98).

Recruited through theoretical snowball sampling, respondents were interviewed using a set of open-ended questions following a semi-structured interview guide based on the key elements of the research question. Following the interview, participants were then asked to make notes using a reflection guide (Appendix D) to capture any subsequent ideas they might feel were relevant to the problem, and a follow-up activity was held four to six weeks following the initial interview, either as a

second interview or through e-mail correspondence. While they were not asked to provide their annotated reflection guides to the researcher, their use of these guides was intended to add depth and possible new perceptions to the follow-up contact. Throughout the process memos were kept of the researcher's evolving understanding of the nature of the research problem and the interview guides were adjusted to follow up on leads or ideas emerging from previous interviews. These interviews were transcribed by the researcher who then undertook iterative textual analysis, identifying both specific and common concepts and themes as they emerged.

3.2. Ethics Review

In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research* involving humans, and with university's policies, the research project was submitted for approval by, and received approval from, the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix F).

3.3. Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

Participants for this study were selected through theoretical sampling, an approach in which the researcher looks for people "who seem likely to epitomize the analytic criteria in which he or she is interested" (Warren, 2002, p. 87). In order to focus on the experiences of a particular subsection of public library users, specific criteria were identified and consistently communicated during the recruitment process. To this end, all selected respondents were identified as public library users. Respondents self-identified as baby boomers, a demographic cohort defined as those born post-World War II, 1946 to 1964 (Statistics Canada, 2007b); they were not expected to provide proof of age. Participants who provided care to someone at least ten years older than themselves were recruited; the decade difference was identified as an explanation of the use of the word 'elder' in the criteria in order

to increase the probability of generational differences and characteristics, particularly related to physical abilities and technology use.

Recruitment began with a notice posted on a kiosk at the library branch (Appendix E). The branch is described by the Library's website as "a well-loved branch ... located on a busy stretch of street in the heart of a very active and community-spirited residential area." Census tract profiles for the neighbourhoods surrounding this branch show the median population age to be slightly older than the median age for this (an average of 40.5 for the four surrounding census tracts, compared to 38.4 for this city (Statistics Canada, 2006). This branch has recently been renovated and has meeting space available by reservation. The characteristics of the branch and the surrounding neighbourhood suggest fertile ground for seeking baby boomer carers.

Additionally, an e-mail notice (Appendix B) was sent to three long-time community residents requesting help in identifying potential respondents (not themselves), using snowball sampling to move from acquaintances to strangers who might provide a rich store of data (Warren, 2002, p. 88). The e-mail notice noted that potential respondents could indicate interest directly by phone or e-mail to eliminate any concern of pressure from the intermediaries.

Response was initially minimal, prompting a widening of the recruitment net. The notice was sent to the community association's electronic newsletter, and posted at two other urban branches, one of which serves a dense seniors' population (i.e., the census tract profile identifies the median age as being ten years more than the city's) (Statistics Canada, 2006), and a second which advertises itself as having an "older adult advisory group." The notice was also posted at a retirement residence near the first library. Word of mouth recruitment continued whenever potential intermediaries for snowball recruitment were met, always following up with the same e-mail message, which emphasized that the e-mail addressee was not a potential participant; rather, they were being invited to tap their social networks on behalf of the researcher. Over the course of approximately five weeks seven people

expressed interest and self-identified as fitting the criteria enumerated on the poster and e-mail. Two responded to posters at their libraries; one saw the poster at the retirement residence; the other four responded to e-mail recruitment.

Once their participation in the study was confirmed through face to face interviews during which the study was explained, an identity key was created for each respondent to assist in keeping the identities of the interview participants confidential.

3.4. Initial Meetings

Prior to the interviews an ice-breaking meeting was held with each respondent. These meetings were used to describe the study, to explain what participation would entail, and to describe the ethical dimensions of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their potential participation. The nature of this type of research involves trust-building between the interviewer and interviewee. These initial meetings were also an opportunity to establish rapport between strangers, find some common ground, and begin to build a relationship. Once a level of comfort was achieved and confirmation of interest in participation was indicated, a meeting for the main interview was scheduled.

3.5. Interview Design

The interview guide was developed using Rubin & Rubin's (2005) "responsive interview" model. This model frames the interview as "an extended conversation" with the caveat that there exist major differences between a conversation and an interview in terms of depth, focus, and the imbalance between participants, in who asks and who answers. The model describes both an overall structure for the interview path, and internal structures of main questions, follow-ups, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pp. 113-147). The intent in preparing the interview guide was to design questions that would elicit answers addressed to the research questions and theoretical context of the study, without over-

directing the content of the responses. To that end questions were kept open ended. The initial ice-breaking meeting provided information that allowed the interview guide to be slightly personalized to each participant. Although the interview guide was modified throughout the elapsed interview period, as emerging themes and categories prompted new ways of questioning participants, the basic structure remained the same. An example of the general interview guide is available in Appendix C.

3.6. Pre-Test

Prior to the study, the draft interview guide was pre-tested with participants who exemplified the theoretical sampling criteria but who were friends of the researcher and thus ineligible for participation. These pre-tests revealed topics and issues that needed to be incorporated more fully into the interview guide in order to be examined during the actual study. These included among others the role of the baby boomer carer as mediator of the library and its services for the elder and situational characteristics of the physical library that created barriers for use by elders. The pre-tests also helped to refine the opening explanation for the study and the ethical considerations around participation, including confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation.

3.7. First Interviews

Interviews were conducted at convenient coffee shops, participants' homes, and in one case, at a food court in a shopping mall. In each case the convenience and comfort of the participant was the main determinant of time and location. Interviews lasted from thirty to sixty minutes. The interviews were recorded with a small Olympus WS—320M digital voice recorder, with the consent of the participants. In most cases, a period of non-directed conversation preceded the formal interview, following up connections or topics that had come up during the initial ice-breaking meeting; this segment was not recorded. The more formal part of the interview began with a verbal reminder of the

purpose of the interview, a reiteration of the ethical considerations, and the signing of the consent form (Appendix A).

Using Rubin and Rubin's (2005) model of responsive interviewing, the interview used the prepared questions as a starting point, but the exact wording, their order, and their number varied as the interview unfolded, and points raised by the respondent were elaborated on and followed up. Themes and topics that emerged during early interviews were incorporated into subsequent interviews for further exploration of their meaning and relationships, following the iterative process central to responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, p. 56). Questions were asked in a general and non-directive manner, with follow-ups and probes used to prompt respondents to clarify or reflect more deeply on their answers. Subjects that seemed particularly important to the respondents were given ample attention, even if off-topic. All interviews concluded with an invitation to the respondents to add anything they thought might be missing from the conversation.

At the end of each interview, a follow up interview for four to six weeks ahead was scheduled. The respondent was given a one-page reflection guide (Appendix D) and asked to keep notes on any observations that arose during the course of the following weeks that might be pertinent based on the topics discussed in the first interview. Each respondent was told that the researcher would not collect their annotated reflection guide; it was for the respondent's use only, to use as a memory prompt.

3.8. Data Handling and Confidentiality

Following each interview, a memo was made of key elements and observations. The sound files were transferred from the voice recorder to the researcher's personal laptop, and were transcribed by the researcher in full. In consideration of confidentiality requirements the laptop is password-protected, behind a firewall, and backed up on a subscription-based password-protected "cloud" security system. All digital material to be stored is recorded on a DVD, deleted from the laptop and the

voice recorder, and along with any print material will be stored in secure facilities in the School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa for a minimum of five years from the completion of the project.

3.9 Follow-up Interviews

The follow-up interviews were a combination of in-person, and e-mail interviews, depending on the request of the participants. The face-to-face interviews took place in the same locations as the first interviews. Respondents brought their reflection guides with any notes they had made regarding their thoughts and experiences regarding their library use for themselves or on behalf of their elder. They were not asked to provide these notes to the researcher. In the cases where a face-to-face interview was held, it was audio recorded. The duration was shorter in all cases, as there tended to be little to add to the discussions of the first interviews. This may be due to the limited number of library experiences participants could reasonably be expected to have within the tight time-frame of the study.

3.10. Data Analysis

As is typical in qualitative interviewing (Rubin, 2005, p. 202), data analysis was undertaken throughout the collection process, as well as afterwards. Memos were written after each interview, at various other times during the collection process, and throughout the transcription of audio recordings. These memos were used to refine and elaborate concepts as they emerged during the study, and to capture hunches and insights. Transcripts and memos were read, notated, and re-read for thematic categories and key quotations. This iterative analysis is a strategy for identification of important content and for verification of the findings.

Answers to the research questions were developed through the analysis of the thematic content of the interviews. Following typical qualitative procedure which “emphasizes gathering diverse but

overlapping data on a limited number of cases or situations to the point of saturation or thematic redundancy," (CIHR, 2010, p. 137) attention was paid to evidence of saturation of themes. As well, as a case study investigating the particulars of each respondent's situation, descriptions of unique experiences were also valued as highlighting areas where policies and practices that serve the majority may have a significant, but unintended impact on individuals (Given, 2003, p. 383).

3.11 Validation

Triangulation is a common procedure to validate findings in case study research, defined as "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2000, p. 454). One procedure to produce triangulation is to increase the number of interviewees to enhance reliability. In this study, the original intent was to recruit three respondents, but for purposes of greater validity, seven were included. An attempt to add perspective was made through the use of the reflection guide; this was limited in success, possibly due to the time constraints of the study.

Social science empirical research frequently involves three other tests of validity (Yin, 1994). Internal validity involves pattern-matching in which concepts are matched to concepts in other research, reliability, in which data collection is carefully documented in aid of replicability, and external validity, "the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized" (Yin, 1994, p. 33). This study aims for internal validity in its grounding in relevant LIS research and literature; data collection is thoroughly documented and reported and external validation results from implications for further research and practice in the LIS field.

3.12. Study Limitations

This research explores the complex and contextually embedded issues relevant to capturing the experiences of baby boomer library patrons in caring relationships with elders. The depth required in this type of research would normally involve long periods of trust-building and ongoing research activity to produce rich data (Given, 2003, p. 379). A limitation of this study is its compressed time frame. The seven interviews were conducted in close chronological proximity; more time between interviews might have allowed for richer transferring of emerging themes from one interview to the next. Similarly time constraints only allowed for one month between the initial interviews and the follow up. As described in 3.10, the paucity of new findings or insights emerging from the follow up interviews may be related to this restricted time frame.

Another impact of the short time frame is an adjustment in the overall strategy of the research. The original intention for this research was as a pilot for a larger, two-phase study that would first investigate the experiences of baby boomer library patrons who provide care and or companionship to elders. A second phase consisting of a Delphi panel was originally proposed to extrapolate with selected experts what implications these experiences might have for public policy and for public library planning and practice. In the original proposal, the first phase proposes in-depth interviews with only three participants, chosen by theoretical sampling to exemplify information-rich cases in relation to the research questions. This data would be enhanced and validated by the Delphi panel, which would present the experts with a questionnaire based on the findings from the initial interviews. However, the potential for richer data resulting from a larger sample of baby boomer library user respondents led to a decision to include seven, rather than three respondents and therefore to exclude the Delphi panel from this project. Further study might include such additional “expert” interviews in a Delphi panel, or through other methods, to provide increased triangulation of data and to investigate implications of the data for public policy and for public library policy and practice.

Finally, it should also be reiterated that this study is not intended to provide generalizable research. Rather the interpretation of the experiences of these seven individuals is intended to provide insight into the lives of a growing part of the Canadian population and of public library usage and to generate insights which might warrant further in-depth study. While this study is limited in its applicability to the general population, it is hoped that the knowledge gained from this exploratory research may provide a basis for a fuller investigation.

Chapter 4: Participants

4.1. Description of Participants

The recruitment criteria for the study participants, outlined in 3.4 above, required that participants be baby boomers, users of the public library, and involved with care of an elder. Beyond questions addressing the research issues, respondents were not asked to divulge personal information that would provide traditional demographic characteristics of age, marital status, income, or education level. Some of these details were volunteered during interviews, but because this type of profile data was not collected in a systematic way, interpretations related to these characteristics are limited.

Some characteristics of participants can be described as summarized by Table 1, *Table of Participants*. Six of the seven were female, and only one respondent lived with the elder in the caring relationship. While specific age data were not gathered, the age range of participants may be characterized: at least two were at the upper range of the traditional definition of baby boomer (approximately 65 years), and one spoke of being 53 years of age. Similarly, employment status can be characterized: none were currently employed full-time; four worked part-time or as freelancers; one was seeking employment; two were retired professionals, keeping busy with activities such as travelling, volunteer work, and writing. This flexibility likely contributed to respondents' ability to be available to participate in this study, and may speak to an inherent bias in results; many baby boomers are still in the workforce, and their experiences of balancing full time employment and their caring activities might have offered a different perspective on the research questions.

Table 1: Table of Participants

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female
Employment	Retired	Part	Part time	Freelance	Seeking	Freelance	Retired

status		time			employment		
Recruitment Technique	Snowball sampling	Snowball sampling	Snowball sampling	Snowball sampling	Poster at Branch 2	Poster at Branch 3	Poster at retirement home

4.2. Carers' Relationships With Elders

As described in 3.4 above, an eligibility criterion was for the baby boomer to be involved with providing care to an elder. The suggested age criterion for “elder” was someone “at least ten years older” than the respondent, in the hopes of maximizing generational differences. The respondents determined for themselves whether they met the “care” criterion; care was not defined as paid or unpaid, or given any other boundaries of time or intensity.

The relationships of respondents to elders are summarized in Table 2, *Summary of Participant Relationship With Elders* below. Among the seven respondents, four provided care to their mothers. Of these four, one shared an apartment with the parent; the others lived within walking distance of the retirement residence where their mothers lived. Three respondents were involved with non-related elders. Of these respondents, two were described as friends (one friend was recently deceased). Of these, both friendships developed through a shared love of books and reading.

The seventh respondent provided paid care to several elderly people and lived in the same area of the city as the clients, who contracted for the service through a local seniors' centre. These clients remained in their own homes, mostly apartments. As described in the caring definition for the study, in 1.7 above, this respondent's relationship with her paid clients brought a different perspective to the research problem. There is ample relevance for this perspective in an aging society with an increased need for formal and informal care arrangements (Duxbury et al., 2009). This respondent's relationships with her clients involved many of the same characteristics as the unpaid care relationships. She was

familiar with their personal histories, their family situations, their likes and dislikes and she saw her role as providing a social connection in addition to specific tasks of light housecleaning or shopping. She suspected that her status as a paid carer in some cases lead to clients confiding information to her that might have been withheld from family members, for fear of raising concerns about the elders' ability to live independently. This pattern of "appearing to cope" in order not to burden children or risk independence, with its corresponding reliance for information on specific "caretakers" has been documented elsewhere (Chatman, 1992, p. 126). Although the role of the local seniors' centre was to act as an intermediary, some clients had their carer's home phone number. In contrast to several of the respondents whose elders lived in retirement homes, this respondent provided insights into issues of elderly people living on their own.

Table 2: Summary of Participant Relationship with Elders

Respondent	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7
Elder	Vision-impaired friend	Mother in retirement home	Paid home caregiver to several elderly people	Mother in retirement home	Shares home with mother	Friend in retirement home (now deceased)	Mother in retirement home

4.3 Characterization of Respondents' Library Use

All participants identify themselves as long-time library users. Some variation is identified in the frequency of their use and its change over time, the purpose of their use, and the use of different branches for different purposes. The use these individuals make of the public library is summarized in Table 3, *Summary of Library Use Characteristics*.

Among the seven respondents, the most frequent library user describes being at the branch "three, four times a week, easily" [R5]; this is also the respondent who made regular use of the public access internet computers. Another respondent says, "How often? pretty much weekly"[R2]. At the

other end of this usage range, a retired information professional says with some surprise *"I'm a library user but not frequent, it's less frequent than I used to be..., I'd say I'm using it less often than I expected to"* [R7].

Acquiring books or other material for their own or their elder's leisure reading or listening (audio books) is a popular reason for library use. Research activities for personal use or on behalf of the elder is also mentioned and is elaborated under 5.2.2.3. Some respondents use library reading areas for reading magazines and newspapers. Two specifically report dropping into the neighbourhood branch to see what is posted on the public kiosk or to see what is available for handouts about cultural or educational activities. One reports using the computers for public internet access; another describes trying out a public library branch as a place to work while undertaking a second undergraduate degree. Browsing is an activity reported by several participants. Most respondents use the library branch most convenient to them if they feel it would suit their needs, particularly for finding books for leisure reading, returning books, and catching up with postings for events and activities. For specialized research, or for the opportunity to browse a wider range of material on a given subject, some report using the main branch. The main branch is also chosen by one participant whose neighbourhood branch is small and which tends to be crowded with families and young children. One visits a particular branch because it subscribes to a magazine needed for professional reasons, and visits a different branch to attend a book club. Altogether, visits to the main library and six different branches are mentioned during the course of the interviews.

Two respondents contrast their use of libraries in other parts of the country with their library use here, and contrast their experiences in these different library settings.

Most respondents make use of non place-based library services, such as the online catalogue and phone or e-mail notifications. Some of their elders are users of the homebound delivery service.

Table3: Summary of Library Use Characteristics

Respondent	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7
Library use	Frequent user	Frequent user	Frequent user	Infrequent user	Frequent user	Frequent user	Infrequent user
	Branches and main	Usually local branch	Usually local branch	Mother's local branch	Local branch and main	Several branches	
	Branches in other library systems	Branch in other library system			Computer access important		
	Online use						

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1. Care in a Library Context Overview

What does it mean to provide care or companionship to an elder in the context of public libraries? First of all, in this study, carers are understood to be people who are concerned with, and take action to support the well-being of elderly friends, family members, or clients. Care can be seen as having two overlapping dimensions: looking after needs, and sustaining relationships (Gilligan, 1982). With the single exception of a respondent who lives with a parent, these participants live separately from the elders with whom they have caring relationships; the elders live in retirement homes or their own houses or apartments. In other words, “care” is not about caregiving in the sense that health researchers might use (Duxbury et al, 2009). Secondly, this study explores the ways in which the caring relationship is constructed within the context of library activities and considers in what ways, if any the library plays a part as respondents seek to meet needs of, and sustain relationships with, their elders. The caring activities within a library context undertaken by these respondents are summarized in Table 4 *Summary of Library Use Characteristics* below.

It has been said that aging is not for the faint of heart. Functional limitations as a result of age-related health conditions and illness are common. For post-retirement aging adults, even those in good health, simply filling the time can be a problem. In the words of a respondent who provides paid care to a number of elderly people who lived on their own: “*I do think many of them find the day long* [R3].” These are the central issues that underlie elders’ needs for assistance noted by, and often provided by, respondents in this study.

Table 4: Summary of Library Use Characteristics

Respondent	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7
Attention paid to elder's pleasure reading	x	X	x	x	x	x	X
Help with info- gathering		x	x		x		
Help with bureaucracy & administration	x		x	x	x		
Computer assistance	x	x	x	x	x		
Non-book library materials			x			x	
Books and book talk	x	x		x	x	x	x
Reporting specifics of elders' tastes	x		x	x	x	x	x

5.1.1 What elder needs are respondents addressing?

5.1.1.1 Need for pleasure reading.

Some respondents in this study characterize the need for reading material as an essential aspect of their elders' lives. *"Reading had been her life"* [R1], is how one respondent describes an elderly woman who went blind quite suddenly. Caring, in this case, involves accessing library services so the blind friend can continue to enjoy books. *"The first thing I did was to start looking for audio editions of the books that her book club was reading, so she would give me the list and I would go search, either the CNIB library and...the public library because they have a really great audio collection. So that sort of got her back into her book club and got her back into reading..."* "Later, realizing that her friend would probably like to read outside of the book club, the respondent helps her register at her local library branch as a "talking book client." *"So from then onwards, if she wants to read something, she'll call me, and I have her card...so I will place a hold for a book, and she gets the usual notification, and she'll go down to (the branch) and get it."* Speaking of her mother's hearing loss, another respondent reports,

“Music has sort of been ruined for her. So, you know, that’s a problem, but reading’s the saving grace” [R4]. Another explains, *“She reads quickly, too, she reads faster than I do, it’s really astounding. She’ll read a book in a few days and I’ll go and get her another one. Sometimes I try to get a big one so she’ll take a month to read it, you know?”*(respondent indicates that this is a joke) [R5]. The appetite for books is voracious, according to a fourth respondent: *“So every month the public library delivers, I don’t know, it’s a huge pile, I’d say it’s about 20, 25 large print books, it’s a big physical pile, it’s huge, and she goes through those during the month, reads pretty much all of them, sometimes you know, she’ll not finish one if she’s really not interested but most of them she goes through, and it’s a whole, varied selection of books... She likes her library pile”* [R7]. It is as though these elders have been waiting their whole lives to be able to read as much as they would like, and now they are seizing the opportunity to partake in an activity that is pleasurable and still possible. Pleasure reading, an activity “not affected by income or general functional status,” has been shown to have a relationship with decreased loneliness in later life (Rane-Szostak & Herth, 1995, p. 107). Respondents demonstrate care by ensuring the need for pleasure reading is met in whatever format is required.

5.1.1.2 Need for information.

Another need that some respondents in this study mediate for their elders is the need for information to aid in solving problems, or “coping information” (Chatman, 1992, p. 124), although they rarely turn to the library for such information. A unique window on the information needs of seniors who live independently comes from the respondent whose paid, part- time employment is caregiving. *“People are always asking me how to get rid of things. Some of them are kind of odd things like walkers that are old, last week it was fluorescent lights.”* Not surprisingly, some information needs are health-related: *“If her doctor says something to her, or they change her medication, or she hears a friend tell about another medication, she tries to find out what she can about it; I know she has drug books, like,*

you know, the big encyclopedias, but I'm sure you could get more up to date information" [R3]. Another respondent's mother's requirement for information related to a veteran's pension, to genealogy, and to tax issues was met at the library [R5].

5.1.1.3 Need for assistance with bureaucracy and administration.

Although most of the examples in this study of respondents' mediation for elders with the organizational bureaucracy deal with the library itself, one person describes researching and writing letters on behalf of a parent at the library to determine her eligibility for a particular government pension supplement [R5]. Further, elders are assisted with the mechanics of such library activities as registering for a card after moving from another city, and registering for the talking books program [R4, R1, R2].

5.1.1.4 Need for computer assistance.

Not surprisingly for pre-digital native generations, respondents report that those elders who have computers sometimes run into problems using them; assistance is required for activities ranging from basic e-mail to forwarding videos to grandchildren, to knowing whether the computer itself is not working or whether the elder has forgotten how to use it [R3, R4]. Respondents report parents who tried computing but "it didn't really take" [R7]; or "she couldn't handle it" [R5]; or who dictated their e-mails to far off relatives, and read the replies as print-outs [R2]. It does not appear from these interviews that any of the elders use any online library services. Difficulties with computer technology would be one barrier to doing so.

5.1.1.5 Need for other library materials.

Most of the library borrowing discussed in these interviews involves books and audio books, but in a few cases, library use includes borrowing non-book material. One respondent has used the library's CD collection on behalf of an elderly friend who led a music program at her retirement residence,

supplementing her own ample music collection with library CDs [R6]. Other reports an elder borrowing audio descriptive videos, which add a descriptive sound track for vision impaired users [R3].

5.1.2 Sustaining relationships through book talk and reading taste

Books and book talk frequently surface as a shared bond between respondents and their elders in this study. One respondent is invited to join her mother's book club when she moved back to the city: *"They needed young blood!"*[R2]. (She estimates that the average age in the club is 80.) Another says, *"When I go visit Mum Sunday, she does tend to talk about whatever books she's been reading that week, some tidbit of information, or somebody's life, she likes these travellers who've gone through Afghanistan or wherever on a donkey, or that sort of thing"* [R7]. A shared love of books is at the root of friendships described in these interviews, as in this comment: *"from time to time we would loan each other books, she loaned me her Dorothy L. Sayers mysteries, and one time we tracked down a poetry book that included selections from her school years, which was a treasure to her, and if somebody else gave her a book that she found interesting she would often loan it to us"* [R6].

Respondents have a finely honed appreciation for their elders' reading tastes. Descriptions of these tastes include genres and sub-genres, authors, and periods : *"She has a sort of a default position toward 19th century, and she'll read a lot of Jane Austen"* [R4]; *"She likes a pretty good mix, crime fiction, people like Doris Lessing, historical romance, or just history..."* [R5]. Respondents enjoy reading each others' recommendations: *"She was looking in the Sunday (book review section) a while ago, and said, they've got a book on Mr. Pearson, Lester Pearson, and I said okay, I'll get it from the library for you. I read it too, Mike Pearson was one of my all time favourite Canadians"* [R5]. These interviews

demonstrate that relationships are formed and sustained through a shared love of books and reading, and that one way caring is demonstrated is by this detailed attention to the elders' tastes and interests.

5.2 Library-as-Place

5.2.1 Place themes overview

Library-as-place was chosen as a conceptual framework for this study because it offers a rich and holistic perspective on the role of public libraries in people's lives. In identifying place literature as a useful way to contextualize library research for an aging population, we are suggesting that library users' experiences are multi-dimensional, comprising a range of behaviours, activities, attachments, and memories, all of which contribute to evolving individual and collective ideas about the public library. In this study, interviews were designed using an existing typology (Schull, 2010) in which place studies are presented as "a way of thinking about the library from an ecological perspective, including how the library interacts with other elements of its environment and what distinguishes it within that environment" (Schull, 2010, p. 79). As described in 2.5.2 above, Schull identifies five dimensions of place that have particular relevance for an aging population:

- location in the community;
- individual associations;
- experiential;
- spatial; and
- symbolic.

While this perspective informed the initial interview design, as themes were isolated and compiled during data analysis, a new five-part categorization of place dimensions emerged. Williamson (2006) has noted that in attending to the particular words participants use to convey their meanings, “ways of thinking about issues, which may not have occurred to the researchers, are often revealed. Thus, the complexities of the real world have some chance of emerging” (Williamson, 2006, p. 98). The emergent typology of library-as-place relevant to these users is as follows:

- physical places;
- personal places;
- information places;
- places without walls; and
- places of institutional power.

These categories emerge from the interview data, but are conceptually grounded in place theory literature, both from a positivist perspective, with an emphasis on the empirical interactions of users in places, and a constructivist perspective, describing a more abstract understanding of the socially and culturally constructed nature of place. The constructivist approach is associated with issues of the fluid, evolving meaning ascribed to the institution and how it functions in peoples’ lives.

5.2.1.1. Physical places.

Respondents experience libraries as “physical places of embodiment in the every day,” (Buschman & Leckie, 2006, p. 12), both in their physicality and through an appreciation of their location in geographical space. This positivist approach to considering place in its tangible form frames one perspective on the library experience for this set of respondents: the library is a place they walk to, drive to and bike to. When they arrive, they park, they find places to work, they peruse express shelves or wander the stacks, they sit at tables or in front of computer screens; they drop books into return bins

and they operate the self checkout. These physical activities may have similarities to those undertaken at other institutions. For example, one respondent makes comparisons to banks and to recycling stations but these activities are also specific to the library experience. The physical dimension of the library, with implications for the physical abilities and stamina of library users, is an aspect of library experience which also has an impact on the respondents' experiences as carers. Among the elders cared for by this group of respondents, almost none physically visited the library, a result of, among other factors, physical decline.

Among the factors library users consider in making the decision to go to a library is geographical locale: how far it is, how handy it is to other destinations in the normal rounds and how easy it will be to get into the parking lot when coming from a particular direction. Respondents comment: *"I could walk but sometimes I'm just zipping home from work, and I'll pull in, or I've taken Mum somewhere and so I'm right there... Parking is a bit of a challenge!"* [R2]. *"No trouble to walk, or take my bike"* [R5]. *"I DO drive. One of the reasons I use (these branches) is because there are parking lots"* [R6]. *"I have been in the downtown library because it's across from my hairdressers, but that would be the only reason. There hasn't been anything I haven't been able to do (at my home branch) if I wanted"* [R2]. These are the kind of public realm people-to-place connections that Lofland categorizes as "paths, rounds, and ranges" (Lofland, 1989, p. 69).

Respondents report locale as one of the reasons for the very little use of the physical library made by those elders who use library services, most of whom prefer homebound services or having the respondent or someone else act as a mediator with the institution. Respondents recognize that for their elders, going anywhere requires more decision-making. They describe a husbanding of energy and resources, and a calculation of the tradeoffs. *"She is mobile and everything but it's gradually getting less and less and she uses a walker when she goes outside, and she doesn't like going outside as much as she used to"*[R7]. *"She's not as strong as she used to be, she can't carry library books home"*[R5]. [A

particular branch] has a long ramp and if you're going to let somebody out of a car to get on to that ramp, usually there's a problem because a lot of other cars are doing the same thing, so, I think considerations like that, you know, I mean, she never wanted to fall and break a hip, because that's no joke at that age" [R6].

Respondents' assistance with their elders' library use relates closely to the elders' mobility. One respondent places online holds for audio books for a vision-impaired elderly friend who is then able to walk on her own to a nearby branch to pick them up. But for others with elders who have been lifelong library users, the branch that is a block and a half away from the retirement home might as well be on the other side of town, thanks to an intervening intersection found to be *"intimidating"* [R4], or because of declining mobility:

R7: "I have asked her maybe 3,4,5 times, made the suggestion (to walk to the nearby library).

Researcher: Yeah, and what does she say?

R7: (a smile in her voice): She doesn't want to go down. It's the physical trip, down that hill, and back up again. For her... it's just... she doesn't want to do it.

Physical barriers tie into emotional ones, highlighting the loss of independence that frail health can imply. A respondent notes that the elder turned down opportunities to visit the library on trips organized by her retirement home: *"I think she didn't like riding in the (retirement home) bus. She just didn't like the way you had to pile in, and have your walker taken away and have it folded up"* [R6]. The indignities of physical decline trumping the pleasure of the library outing will be an increasing characteristic of an aging population.

The physical design of space and detailing inside branches has a taken-for-granted quality in these interviews, although respondents have opinions about certain aspects of the physical experience. Inside a newly renovated branch before-and-after comparisons are made: *"the lighting is harsher over there now..."* [R2] *"I think they put in some more, you know, comfortable chairs... As opposed to, like*

they had all the comfortable, what you could call comfortable, were down where the newspapers and magazines were? Sort of upholstered chairs there. And down in the other section they really had next to nothing....where they had any extra space they put those paperback carousels. But it looks quite nice now because it looks like a cosy little area” [R3].

Speaking of another branch, a respondent comments: *“in the periodical newspaper section there are two or three chairs around a coffee table, so, it wouldn't hurt if they had more of that; maybe it's the best they can do” [R6].* This recognizes libraries as not infinitely able to meet the comfort needs of patrons, yet there is a wish for the library to evolve as a more comfortable place. Another respondent complains about the lack of places to sit near the fiction shelves in her branch; to take advantage of the pleasures of physical browsing, some aging patrons need places to sit.

The physicality of a setting is experienced through its accessibility; branches may be compliant with legislative requirements but details that have an impact on the quality of the library-going experience may not be addressed when institutions merely meet the requirements, and do not strive to achieve a more universally accessible service. A respondent describes accompanying an aging parent into a local branch, and noticing that some of the signs are *“a bit high for somebody with a walker.”* She decides to point this out in a friendly way to a library employee: *“I said quite casually, you know your Dewey Decimal signs are quite high, they're high for me! Just for reading, they're really for someone 5' 6 or 7, and I'm five (foot), and he said, oh yes, that's a good point.* [Respondent laughs, seems to have felt dismissed.] *So I'll go back and see if anybody...probably not” [R2].*

These interviews indicate that proximity and sensitive design are concerns for these users. Physical comfort and ease of use are factors that affect their library use experiences. They report that these factors have a strong bearing on the non-use made by their elders of the physical library, whose physical decline results in the less frequent choice of the library as a priority destination.

5.2.1.2 Personal places.

“Place” in this category takes its meaning from this humanistic definition (Osburn, 2007):

“‘Place’ is a setting of any dimension and type in which an individual perceives a special spirit (genius loci) that is generated by the quality of experience related to the values and associations it recalls, and whose significance to the individual captures an extraordinary order and heightens related awareness that becomes an inspiration for imagination and behaviour” (Osburn, 2007, p. 63). In this study, respondents describe the library as the place to which they bring powerful memories and associations, created over a half a century of library use, which lead to particular expectations about their library experiences. Schull (2010) notes that in considering services and facilities in an aging society, librarians “will need to examine... what individuals bring to the library experience. What pre-conceptions, assumptions, recent experiences, and memories—or lack thereof—do 50+ adults carry with them as they consider whether and how to enter the library space?” (2010, p. 83). As individuals in relationships with elders, the respondents in this study notice with interest and some surprise how their own, and their elders’ library attachment changes, and in some cases disappears, as life circumstances change.

As the baby boomer respondents in this study describe themselves engaged in library use, the picture that often emerges is one of contemplative, private, introspective behaviour, in which the inner life is being created and re-created, and the sense of place and attachment to place are being continuously constructed. One respondent, in talking about whether the library is a social place, reacts to the question “*Are you interested in talking to librarians or talking to other patrons when you're in the library?*”

R7: *No, not exactly. No. Because, I mean, it's a subdued social. If anybody was having a rather extended conversation you'd kind of think, well, why don't you go to a coffee shop, you know. So it's not like you want it to be deathly quiet. But people are usually there in a somewhat serious mood, and a little bit introspective, sometimes, and, it's GOOD for that, it's the place where you choose to go when you're*

feeling that way, or when you have some thinking to do, or when you have... Some RESEARCH to do, or, y' know, whatever, browsing, even browsing is kind of an introspective thing, you know, you're focusing elsewhere. It's sort of social because there are other people there in the same frame of mind but you wouldn't want it to turn into something, something different."

The pleasures of browsing are illustrated with a respondent who describes her use as either picking up holds which she has requested on someone's (often her mother's) recommendation, or as browsing: *"Oh yes, I browse. I browse.... I either request, or generally, I wander the shelves...I can wander up and down the rows, and find stuff"* [R2].

It must be noted that these pleasures are not always available to the elders who do go to the library. For her vision-impaired friend who picks up holds at the library, a respondent notes, *"There's absolutely nothing there for her to sit and browse. She'd have to take her [reader] machine along if she decided she wanted to browse a few books before she decided which ones to take, so its easier just to take them and bring them back later"* [R1].

Nurturing of the inner life is not limited to the use of items in the collection. The posters on the library bulletin board kiosk are described as library attractions:

R7: Things are posted there that maybe aren't posted other kinds of places, things to do with, things I might be interested in, you never really know what kinds of things are going to be there. I do a writing workshop on Wednesday nights.

Researcher: You teach it or you take it?

R7: Take it. But I think, I think I saw the little poster for that there, at the library, and I know there are other posters there right now for writing workshops, there's a couple of different ones that I saw ... Or, you know, French language learning, just keeping an eye out for things for my kids too, because my daughter needs to improve her French a bit, or wants to... anyway, things that are not, exactly, you don't find them in a grocery store.... Where else would you find something that kind of has that

orientation, something to do with writing, something to do with books, probably, something to do with learning, a lot of learning, and you know, things like gardening, even."

The attachment to the library as a place is rooted in childhood memories for some respondents. When asked if the weekly library use one respondent reports is always at the same branch, this exchange occurs:

R2: "Always this branch."

Researcher: "and that's because...."

R2: "Well, it's.... MY branch!"

The associations and sense of ownership that this particular respondent has for this branch go back to childhood, as she recalls with surprise in her voice, *"I do remember school trips ... to [this] library. It seems it was a regular thing when I was a kid."* That sense of branch ownership can exist even when the branch is never used, as in the case of a respondent who refers to *"my local branch"* as too tiny and crowded for the kinds of library use she would like to make. Another speculates that a love of books and reading began when, dropped off at the library by a mother who *"wanted to get me out of her hair,"* the world of photography books presented itself: *"every kid likes the photo books, eh? The coffee table things? ...Those animals, or tall ships, that sort of thing, that's how I got reading, I guess"*. [R5].

Two respondents speak with affection of libraries in other parts of the country, one on Vancouver Island and one on Nova Scotia's south shore, presenting a kind of idealized vision of the public library as a place which functions as a community hub, where multiple user groups co-exist harmoniously, where librarians are present and helpful, and where the atmosphere is conducive to reading and browsing. The British Columbia library is described this way: *"It was not... It was not technical. Like, they didn't have anything automated. I would say I used the librarians much more there. Why would that be? [she asks herself quietly]. Hmm. Umm [long pause] I don't know, it was a very..."*

Very um... People-y place. That library. There were kids, you know, like, when you'd go in, the kids would be, there might be a kids circle on one side. It was probably smaller; I don't think there was a downstairs, so... It was a smaller branch, so the kids' activities could be happening on one side; and there're lot of seniors and there's a big senior building right across the road. So there'd often be a lot of older people sitting reading newspapers there; it was a nice branch... I sort of over a few years saw things like the increase in computers which is challenging, especially in a branch with lots of seniors, but I would find often the librarians helping people figure out how to use email and that sort of thing" [R2].

Another respondent describes her use of a small-town library on the east coast: *"In the summer I will actually sit and read the paper or the magazines; it's a small town but it's a nice library with a nice area to sit, and it's pleasant just to be there for awhile."* In this east coast small town library, the respondent reports that her own library-going behaviour changes: *"In the summer, when it's a much smaller library that I use, in Nova Scotia, I do actually go and browse, particularly biography and history, and pick out all kinds of stuff that I wouldn't normally go and read; I read differently in the summer than I do in the winter for some reason!" [R1].* In these settings both respondents describe their use of the library shifting in response to a different atmosphere, set of characters, and physical surroundings, each constructing meaning out of the meetings of their needs and expectations with the atmosphere and offerings in each location.

The perspective of libraries as personal places that can be seen as "fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory" (Stokowski, 2002, p. 369) helps contextualize the surprise some respondents express as they recognize that neither they nor their elders use the public library in the way they once did. One person reports: *"I used to go all the time, but as I said I tend to buy books, you know, and I've got a backlog of books people have given me that I haven't even read yet, and you have to kind of get through those before you go looking for new books, so, I'd say I'm using it less often than I expected to" [R7].*

The same respondent discusses a parent's non-use of library facilities: *Researcher: Do you think she misses being in the library? As a regular library user? R7: She doesn't appear to [chuckles.] I mean, I think she probably has good memories of being at the library, but she's never said, yeah, I wish I could go.*

A similar story comes from the daughter of an avid library user who has recently moved to her new location from a smaller city. The mother had once worked as a school librarian, and had *"an ongoing presence over about, I think three different libraries,"* in her home town. *"I would say it's very much part of her life, but she's finding because she's here... there's much more stimulation"* [R4]. Her mother's library use, beyond getting a card, is to this point, non-existent. She has books to read which she brought from her former home, and her daughter has purchased books for her as well. Similarly, with the help of the homebound service, a 97 year old person who would visit the pharmacy and the dollar store on her own, no longer has to use her active, mobile time for library visits. Her daughter says, *"She doesn't go to the library very often anymore because she doesn't use books, and, the CNIB sends her discs..."* [R2] If this woman requires a title for her book club that the CNIB cannot provide her daughter or a librarian friend will find it and bring it to her.

In these cases carers are realizing that their elders are successfully acquiring the reading material they need via other means, and whatever bond the elders may have had at one time with the physical aspects of the institution simply are not strong enough to keep them coming. The role of the library as a personal place to engage in activities that speak to the inner self, clearly important to a number of these respondents, appears less relevant to their elders, who are perhaps finding other ways to achieve the same ends, and who in many cases may not need to look to the library to find an abundance of quiet time for contemplation in their lives.

5.2.1.3 Informational places.

In considering the library-as-place, Fisher et al. (2007) propose the addition of “informational” place to other place frameworks that do not “explicitly incorporate information seeking and consumption as a core aspect of place. “An ‘informational place’ can be operationalized as comprising all themes regarding information finding and seeking, reading, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment” (Fisher et al., 2007, p. 153). As other library researchers have discovered (Most, 2009, p. 24) the emerging framework of informational place is a helpful addition to a theoretical understanding of library as place. In this study, “informational place” characterizes respondents’ descriptions of many library use activities. Purposeful information-seeking behaviour for research, pleasure reading, and/or leisure activities, is a characteristic of the descriptions respondents offer of what they do at the library. It accounts for activities they undertake for themselves, and to a much lesser degree, for their elders; it encompasses the many references to browsing, and it can be applied to library computer resources used for job searching, online job testing, and video-watching.

For the purposes of this study the holistic grouping of these activities, without distinguishing between, for example, consumer research, entertainment, or bulletin board browsing, captures the way respondents characterise their library use, for themselves and their elders, without creating a hierarchy that privileges certain uses over others. Further, in this perspective, information technology can be integrated as a tool to support the use of the library as an informational place in this broad sense. This study identifies a number of ways respondents use the library as an informational place: for their own personal reasons, in their role as mediators on behalf of their elders, and in their use of the library’s resources to assist them in their caring role. Finally it considers alternatives to the library as an informational place for this group.

a. Informational place for self.

For one respondent, there is no question of what her weekly library visits are in aid of: *“My library use is pretty much for entertainment”* [R2]. Another tries not to use up the entire allotted hour of library’s internet access for job searching and e-mail, so that there will be a bit of time left over, *“probably 10 minutes of entertainment, that’s when I’m like listening to music, ...and you can actually go on and find videos, run a video of somebody”* [R5]. Respondents do not necessarily distinguish between fiction and non-fiction when describing their library use: *“I have favourite authors in fiction, or pet subjects and I look for them. I always look over the new books to see what there is”* [R6].

Among the varied informational uses respondents make of the library there is a clear need expressed for it to be a place for purposeful research. The main library is perceived as a better source for research than are branch libraries: *“Well it’s got more books. There’s just more resources, more volume, you know, it’s just bigger”* [R5]. Although library material is easily transferred between branches, another respondent explains why the main library is a destination for research:

R7: If I really AM looking for information, like a travel book, for a particular country... it’s more likely to be at the Main branch, I sort of know that. You’ll have better luck finding something there.

Researcher: Would you browse, or would you be using the catalogue?

R7: In that case I’d probably use the catalogue, to get an area ... then I’ll go and browse. Because it doesn’t really matter, you can find the perfect thing in the catalogue, but if it’s not on the shelf....”

Another reports using the main library for professional and personal reasons, including to access an online database that has to be used within the library, to browse the arts and crafts area, and to *“sit and read the magazines and have a coffee if I have time to spare downtown”* [R1].

Branches are not always seen as places that promote the full range of educational activity envisioned in the original definition of informational place. One respondent, a recent retiree who has just completed a second undergraduate degree, describes an effort to use the closest public library

branch as a place to do school work. *"I tried to do some homework there once, I was maybe working on an essay or something, but it drove me crazy, it was really, really loud. It was somebody explaining, some staff member explaining to a volunteer how... to replace books on the shelf, and it went on and on, for about 20 minutes, very loud instructions"* [laughs as she tells story] [R7]. This staff behaviour suggests a clash of values between patrons and the institution over what the characteristics of an informational place might be in regards to appropriate behaviour.

b. Informational place on behalf of elder.

Several participants in this study function as mediators between their elders and the library as an informational place. Examples of this include the respondent who uses the online catalogue to place holds for a visually impaired friend in order to ensure the friend always has books to listen to, and another who, along with her husband, has picked out library CDs for an elderly friend who ran a music appreciation group in her retirement home. *"She had quite an extensive personal collection of CDs, you know, classical music and things from the big band era, people like Louis Armstrong that she liked from years gone by. But eventually she ran out of what she had, and, she also liked special things on certain themes, so she would make a list of selections or themes or bands she would like to play for the next music meeting, and then [we] would go to the library...and pick them out for her, get the closest thing to what she wanted. Usually [the respondent's husband] would search the internet first; sometimes we just went in and sorted through what was there"* [R6].

Respondents play other mediating roles as well. Some organize the registration required to access the CNIB library. Three respondents report picking up and returning books and other library materials for elders. One who regularly uses the library on behalf of an increasingly frail mother notes that before she fell ill, *"she could carry a book home, on the bus or something... but now she depends on me for that"* [R5]. This respondent uses the library extensively in quests for information relating to the

parent's tax issues, a veteran's supplement, medication, and genealogical research. The parent raises an issue and the respondent then acts as the information intermediary with the library [R5].

c. Informational place in support of caring role.

For the group of carers in this study, the library is almost never a source of information that aids in carrying out any of the additional roles which might be expected in these caring relationships. For example only one respondent describes using the library to find information to deepen her own understanding of an elder's health issues [R3]. This set of respondents may not have information needs in relation to these roles, perhaps because for many of them, the physical caring questions are largely dealt with in other ways. Alternately as described in the next section, they use sources other than the library to satisfy these information needs.

d. Alternatives to the library as an informational place.

For the majority of respondents who have internet at home, search engines eliminate the need to use the library as an informational place. One respondent, when asked what the parent does when information is needed replies, *"She would ask me,"* and when asked how the respondent would find what was needed, continues: *"Well, it would depend what she wanted. She's learned about the internet from me, so every now and then she'll say, can you Google this? Then she cracks up. Because she doesn't really understand.... But she knows that if you Google something, it's amazing right then and there, I can answer a question"* [R2].

For one formerly avid library user, the ease of acquiring e-books has diminished the need for library use to find books: *"I'm buying books again for the first time in years and years; I'm really not a book buyer, and [I am now]... that's because of convenience and instant gratification [chuckle]. I'll read the Globe and Mail review and ten minutes later I've got the book on my Kindle"* [R1].

Some elders continue to look after their own information needs. A respondent describes the personal research library kept by her mother in her retirement home: “*She’s got her own world atlas, dictionary, encyclopedia, different things like that*” [R7]. Another respondent bought a Mac computer at age 90, and her daughter reports that having originally bought it for writing and for skyping with a family member, the mother now uses it for reading the *Globe and Mail* and for conducting personal research “*if she remembers*” [R4].

5.2.1.4. Places without walls.

Ahlberg (2010) writes “one can easily be a library user without ever visiting a physical library.... When two people talk about the library they may easily be talking about completely different types of institutions, interfaces, platforms or experiences” (para.5). Although an institution’s capacity to reach outside its own walls and provide personalized services to patrons wherever they happen to be is an axiom of digital environments, services that “spread in every direction” are not necessarily creatures of the digital age: the Eaton’s catalogue, home milk delivery, and doctors’ house calls remind us that bringing services to customers where they live is not a new idea. Respondents in this study experience the library as the library, whether they go to it, or it comes to them via phone call alerts about due dates, remote access to the catalogue, or book drop-offs to their elders from the homebound service. “Great libraries integrate the marketing of virtual, place and outreach services” (Holt, 2006). From the respondents’ perspective in this study, the virtual, place, and outreach services of the library are one seamless entity: the phone messages about due dates, the online catalogue, and the personalized homebound service are experienced as a library without walls. Their stories also reveal how a place without walls can sometimes be a place without human support, leading to missed opportunities and negative experiences for themselves and their elders. These two aspects, the virtual and the personal, and the consequences of missed opportunities will be discussed below.

a. The virtual library.

Most respondents in this study with home computers are aware of, and use the online catalogue. One respondent appreciates the efficiency of the online library on behalf of her elderly, visually impaired friend: *“If she wants to read something, she'll call me, and I have her card and ... because she's not using a computer I have access to her account at the library, and so I will place a hold for a book, and she gets the usual [telephone] notification, and she'll go down to (her branch) and get it”* [R1]. Another respondent occasionally needs two copies of books for the book club she and her mother belong to, one of which needs to be an audio version for her mother: *“if it was a book club book that both of us wanted ... it was both in tape or disc and in book, so I had a hold on her request for both, so she could get it on audio, and get it in paper.... she's happy with the help she's got from the library. I now think of the CNIB as the library”* [R2]. The partnership that the public library has with the CNIB (formerly the Canadian National Institute for the Blind), allowing registered users to have access to their library validates Ahlberg's (2010) assessment that in the library of today, “the users move around according to their own needs” (para. 7).

b. The personalized library.

Personalization of online user experience is now a well-established commercial and marketing practice which works in two directions. Recommender systems such as Amazon or even public library catalogues are sites where these push-pull practices can be observed tailoring products to individual interests. Respondents in this study appreciated the library's efforts at personalization of library services: *“these days if you have something on hold and it's available, you get the phone call, and uh, this is a good service; ...You can find out how much you're owing (laughs) if anything's overdue, what's out; and you have the renewal service, which is good; depending on the book, sometimes I need to keep it an extra week, and it's like 25 cents for an extra week, cause if I don't do that, it's like 25 cents a day! So, and it adds up, you know!”* [R5]

The homebound service extends the theme of personalization. A respondent whose mother uses the homebound service attaches importance to its curated aspect: *"You know, somebody else is picking your twenty-some, or thirty-some books, and, you know, you have your opinions, I like that one, don't bother with that one, but you know you're getting an extra kick out of it somehow, somebody else is selecting them, and you're reacting to this, so ... it's not random, there's an intelligence working there"* [R7]. It has been suggested that, given this pervasive trend towards personalization the future of library service may lie in the same direction, with the development of systems that will be "designed to recognize the individual user's preferences and to respond accordingly," (Brophy, 2007, p. 141).

c. Lack of support.

A risk of catering to users in their own homes can be the lack of support for isolated individuals. Computer systems in particular can be difficult to access or use. Baby boomer patrons whose computer facility begins and ends with whatever programs they may have used in their work can be flummoxed when faced with a new or changed version of software with which they had become familiar. Respondents describe relying on family members to use the library's online offering: *"Often I'll read something and then I'll mention to my daughter, 'next time you're on the library site can you check this out?' I feel kind of silly to be asking her, but any time I've gone on I haven't been able to find, like, I don't know how to do a search properly so that I can easily get to what I'm trying to find. She seems to have no difficulty, she'll come out and say 'I ordered you four out of this list' or whatever"* [R3]. Another respondent who describes her computer use as unsophisticated: *"I'm a writer but that means using it as a glorified typewriter,"* struggles when the library changes its online catalogue: *"At one point I got quite adept in calling up the Public library on my home computer, and getting out my library card, and typing in my telephone number which is the access number, and my card number, and finding what I want. Since then, though, they've changed the system. Usually I have to call my husband to help me. I don't*

know if I've successfully reserved anything on my own since they changed the system (laughs ruefully as she says this) I'm hoping to learn, but..." [R6].

Lack of support for those accessing remote services is not only an issue for digital offerings. Without helpful family members or other assistance, any system can break down completely leading to a lost opportunity to meet someone's need, as illustrated in this story of an elderly friend with deteriorating eyesight: *"One of her family members decided at that point she would start borrowing books on CD for her through the library, and this granddaughter set up a system, and got [the grandmother] a card, and when we went over to visit we would notice that there was this player and these books around. And she tried them, but at some point she didn't persist with it. I think she wasn't that keen on what she got, and because of bad eyesight, and no computer skills, and not being able to go, she couldn't pick for herself, and then there was always the dread of not getting the thing listened to and the due date would come and it would be overdue on somebody's bill, somebody's card; there was one occasion when she packed up this container and said 'would you take it back and drop it because I don't have time to listen to it and it's going to be overdue,' and I think her granddaughter, who was really busy, didn't really have time to pick it up, so... So it didn't work terribly well for her" [R6].* In this case two sets of carers, the granddaughter and the respondent, are unable to mediate this library program effectively for the elderly person who is the intended user. This story is not indicative of other comments from other respondents about the homebound service, but it highlights the value of anomalous issues that can emerge in qualitative studies. Given (2006) observes: "these singular experiences can highlight the individual needs of patrons, particularly in settings where policies and practices have been designed for a majority of patrons – with the unintended effect of marginalizing those with specific needs" (2006, p. 383).

5.2.1.5 Places of institutional power.

Within their “built forms” (Dale and Burrell, 2008, p. 47), organizations embody their particular institutional interests and identities and their related systems of norms, expectations, policies and rules all of which can be characterized as “power-relations” in action (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 68). Libraries can be seen as places where “social and cultural power is incorporated and embodied in the... taken-for-granted notions of these spaces. In other words, power relations are performed without being seen as a form of power” (Dale & Burrell, pp. 68-69). This characterization of the library is not intended to imply something negative or underhanded, but rather to acknowledge a fifth dimension of library-as-place that respondents describe in this study. The power relationships that exist in the library can have their greatest impact on those most dependent on the library and its services, since the latter have the fewest options to meet their library needs in other ways. As the human embodiment of the power of the organization, library employees have a significant impact on the quality of the reported library experience. Respondents describe considerable variability in the attitude and flexibility of employees regarding enforcement of the rules and assistance with the systems. Further, as carers, respondents are very aware that employee interpretation and execution of library practices and rules can have a dramatic impact on the quality of their elders’ library experiences. Examples of library rules and systems that are noted by respondents in this study are the application of fines to overdue books, the amount of time allowed to individuals on the public internet access computers, membership requirements, and the classification system. How employees perform their role as holders of institutional power is also examined.

a. Fines.

The economic sanction of applying fines for overdue books is noted by several respondents.

R5: I keep them going, I had enough fines last year, it was grotesque; the worst year was the bus strike, I must have owed them a hundred dollars by the end of the year.

Researcher: Oh, that's bad!

R5: Well, I just kind of sat on things, it's a good thing they remind you.... I've whittled it down now.... It's less than 20, I think it's 14 bucks I still owe them."

Other respondents report that the fines motivate them to return overdue books. Talking about making a special library trip rather than fitting it in with other activities, one respondent notes: *"Well, if I think I'm going to be overdue [big laugh], 50 cents or whatever it is, I'll whip up there"* [R2]. Another avoids a local bookmobile stop in her neighbourhood unless it is *"to drop off a book that's dangerously overdue"* [R2]. *"I'll borrow CDs from time to time. You gotta watch that, they only give you a week, and the fines are (laughs ruefully while saying this) fifty cents a day, so you gotta be careful! ...I usually borrow something, maybe listen to it twice, and give it back"* [R5]. A respondent describes an elder's *"dread" of not returning audio books by the due date* [R6].

b. Public internet access computers.

With the United Nations proposing that internet access is a human right (Kravets, 2011), the importance of the role of public libraries in providing this access is increasingly evident. Fairness among patrons requires that scarce time online be allocated in a reasonable way, leading to time restrictions for patrons using the computers. In this study, one respondent is largely dependent on the library for computer and internet access and uses it in a variety of ways: for job searching, for writing letters and e-mails on behalf of their elder, for research, and for online job tests, all of which speak to the ubiquity of computers in daily life. Computer patrons are always subject to these rules and moreover to the staff's ability to exercise individual interpretations and judgement calls: *"I'll be there for an hour and then they let you extend it a bit, sometimes they let you extend it"* [R5].

c. Membership.

Rules around membership are another example of the ways the institution constructs its operations. Respondents in this study find their caring functions are supported by rules that enable them to manage their elders' library card and account. One who registered her mother as a talking book client finds it very useful to keep her mother's card with her because it allows her to be "*the pickup person*" [R2]. The respondent who orders materials for a vision-impaired friend explains that she is permitted by the library to have access to her friend's account so that she can order adaptive materials for which there are borrower restrictions. Another elder-friendly membership rule, she notes, is that patrons who require adaptive services may self-declare their need and in this way have access to these restricted collections. In some other jurisdictions these materials are restricted to patrons who can provide official assessments, which are often difficult and expensive to acquire.

Other membership rules prove to be less supportive of one respondent's caring role. Her 93-year-old mother, a former school librarian and life-long library user, had moved into a retirement home from a smaller city elsewhere in Ontario. They undertook an exploratory trip to the nearby library branch to register her mother as borrower, but were declined despite the fact that the mother held a valid drivers' licence from her former city. "*They said, well, you'll need to have... something with the address of [the new retirement residence], something with your picture on it [the employee] just wasn't offering alternatives, or saying 'you're in (the residence), we have a homebound program' which seems like such a simple thing to do*" [R4]. Happily this negative experience was mitigated by other friendly and helpful staff whose embodiment of institutional power took a more caring and service-oriented form, one of whom advised her about the library's service to her new retirement residence. However, three months after this "welcome" to the library system, the mother had not been back.

d. Classification.

At the heart of a library are its information systems without which access to, and retrieval of holdings would not be possible. But in analyzing the library as a place of power relationships, the keepers of the systems are the holders of power; they know the language or code that facilitates access, a code that has to be learned by users. In considering the social construction of the library as place, and the embedded power relationships, the institutionalized systems can be addressed. One respondent who speaks to this admits, *"I'm really helpless at the library, I kind of wander around, I really don't understand the way things are set up. I should"* [R3]. Referring to large signs indicating subject headings posted at the ends of the stacks prior to a recent renovation, she adds, *"As long as you were looking for one of those key things, those categories, you could find it... they only covered a couple of categories, they didn't cover everything that was going to be down that row, so I tended, you know, I kind of knew where fiction was and stuff like that, uh (long pause) even now I go and I kind of like.... Where are things..."* [says this very quietly].

Another respondent suggests that aging patrons would be well served by the establishment of a seniors' collection: *"You could actually have something as basic as a shelf section ...strictly for seniors? It is going to be the biggest demographic... I mean, I'm getting closer every day, so [chuckles] I'm 53 for gosh sakes!*

Researcher: What would you want to see in a senior's section?

R5: Things having to do with their taxes, retirement fund, pension information, health section, yeah, you could break it down that way, you could have a whole row just for seniors... in their search engine, you have a topic, "seniors" and it's itemized very well, laid out very well; you go into the stacks and I find it's all over the place; that's the practical stuff for becoming a senior's service.

Libraries have excellent reasons for maintaining cataloguing and classification practices, but in this set of interviews, educated baby boomer respondents are expressing concern about a lack of

knowledge of these practices or some frustration with them, which may affect their access to library material.

e. Employees as the face of institutional power.

Finally, the behaviour and attitudes of public library employees on behalf of the institution have a tremendous impact on the quality of the library experience of a number of the respondents in this study, both as aging individuals themselves, and as carers for elders. Helpful librarians who tracked down particular resources, found call numbers, and provided technical help with printers are cited, but so are interactions that proved less than service-oriented for respondents in this study.

As institutions evolve to meet the needs of a changing population, employee behaviour operationalizes the changing mandate. One respondent, a long-time loyal library patron expresses a feeling of dislocation in the treatment she receives. In e-mail correspondence, she recounts a story of visiting the library with her husband, and undertaking some magazine research. *“We sat alone at a table for six in the reference area; at the other table was a woman of a certain age reading on her [e-reader]. A library staff member came to us and told us to vacate the tables as a group needed them for a meeting. We found carrels to work in. Then, two people, who may have been from the ESL [English as a Second Language] program in the library, sat at our table for about five minutes and left. That was the meeting, I guess. No person or group came to sit at the other table. There was no sign or anything suggesting that the tables were reserved for any specific use. No one would quarrel with the presence of ESL and youth programs, but it seems that seniors' needs are pretty low on the list of priorities”* [R6]. Assuming that the ESL reference relates to patrons who are visible minorities, this story seems to be about an employee carrying out an institutional mandate for providing services to a diverse population, but who has been unable to successfully balance the interests of different user groups.

Another story of institutional power as experienced through an employee's behaviour comes from a respondent who accompanies a visually impaired friend to a branch for a card: *"we went to the desk to sign her up, and..., it's important to let people do it themselves, so, having got it started, I left her, I let her talk to the person, and they signed her up and that was fine. And then (the friend) said, 'I can get to the library okay but I'll need help getting the book off the shelves, will you...' Well, [IMITATING EMPLOYEE, USES OFFICIOUS VOICE] if I'm not busy I'll help'.... Subsequently she's made a couple of friends on the information desk and she has no problem at all. But she really can't see well enough to see her name on the back of books, and anyway she was quite overwhelmed by the quantity that's there, and the idea of having to hunt out these; and then I think originally she thought she might want to go down there and choose books and would someone help her do that and the woman basically said 'No'"* [R1]. This respondent is quick to point out that other experiences with other friends, other employees, and in other branches have been "spectacular," and in this particular case, other people see to it that the user experience is ultimately successful. However, this experience illustrates an institutional message performed by an employee which delineates limits to the assistance a user may expect to receive. The tone of the interchange conveys a message about the power embodied in the employee vis a vis the user, and illustrates a place-making activity: "the communicative practices used by social actors in advancing their positions" (Stokowski, 2002, p. 374) is evidence of "power relationships in social negotiations over places" (p.375).

5.3 Summary

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of data gathered from interviews with seven baby boomer library patrons who were involved in caring relationships with elders. It describes an understanding of caring based on the model of the ethic of care, which is concerned with looking after

needs and sustaining relationships; it shows how participants constructed the concept of care within a library context. Further, it considers how respondents created meanings of place as they interact with the public library, describing experiences of the library as a physical place, a personal place, an informational place, a place without walls, and a place of institutional power.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter returns to the research questions that guide this study, and considers how they are addressed by the data. It suggests areas for further investigation and presents a brief critique of the study.

6.2 Summary of Research

Within the context of demographic change, as outlined in 2.2, this study is intended to increase understanding of one public library user group whose members belong to a growing segment of the population, and are thus a group whose characteristics will become increasingly important to understand. The research is exploratory. Using an instrumental case study approach with long form responsive interviews, the goal is to investigate the subjective experience of baby boomer public library users who are in a caring relationship with elders. Findings offer insights into the guiding research questions for the study which were as follows:

1. How do baby boomer public library users who provide care and/or companionship to elders interact with the public library?
2. How do these users experience the library as a place?
3. What library use characteristics and behaviours of this user group suggest opportunities for further investigation?

In regards to the first question, respondents' interaction with the public library takes many forms, and is described in detail in Chapter 5. While it is important not to generalize from this theoretical sample, these respondents describe using the library to meet their own needs for leisure

reading and other kinds of information, and to find out about activities in their community. In some cases they also mediate the library for their elders by assisting with registration for services and with borrowing and returning materials, by ensuring elders' awareness of home-based and adaptive services, by using the online catalogue to assist vision-impaired elders with materials selection and ordering, and by using library resources to meet information needs of elders.

Perhaps as significant are two ways in which these self-described library users do not interact with the public library. First, they generally do not use the information resources of the library to assist or support them in their role as carers. Furthermore, other than for "signing up" expeditions, these users do not attempt to accompany their elders to the physical library, even though most report other types of outings with their elders, such as accompanying them to appointments, shopping, restaurants, drives, and church functions. Both of these non-uses raise interesting questions for further investigation, described below.

In response to the second research question and as described earlier in detail in 5.2.2, respondents in this study describe their experience of library-as-place in five general ways: a) as physical places, bounded geographically and with distinct physical characteristics; b) as personal places whose meaning is constructed through use, memory, and association; c) as informational settings comprising all information-seeking and leisure reading activities; d) as places without walls, where personalization of service is appreciated and increasingly expected; and e) as places of institutional power, embodied in systems and rules which are enforced by library employees.

Finally, in response to the third research question, this exploratory study identifies several library use characteristics and behaviours that bear follow-up investigation.

To begin, these respondents demonstrate an affective connection with the institution. As carers, respondents express gratitude when library services support them by meeting their elders' needs, and are saddened or annoyed with the institution when the opposite occurs due to poor customer relations,

unreasonably strict adherence to rules, or lack of attentiveness to accessibility issues. Further investigation which explores this emotional connection might illuminate ways that libraries can work more closely with baby boomer carers to support them in their caring roles.

The bond these respondents describe with the library makes obstacles less significant for them, but identifying these obstacles may illuminate reasons for non-use by others in the same age cohort. Some respondents report feeling intimidated or discouraged by library rules, systems, or poor customer relations. Usability testing, “secret shopper” methods, and other evaluation strategies could help libraries ensure that they identify and combat barriers to use for current and potential users, in person and online.

The ability to use library services without cost is an important criterion for some respondents who depend on the library’s public access computers, or who seek out no-longer-subscribed-to magazines related to professional work, a use described by one respondent as “a typical old person’s economy”[R6]. Being able to borrow, rather than have to purchase books is less a choice than a necessity for some. Diminished discretionary spending will be a reality for many aging boomers; exploring ways to promote the public library’s value as a “free” informational, recreational, and supportive place for older adults could inform library marketing and outreach strategies.

As described above, two non-use behaviours are identified in this study. First, these users do not turn to the library to assist them in their role as carers. Yet community-based library services seem ideally placed to connect people to information and services. This finding suggests a need for further research to determine to what extent this is a function of this sample, these branches, or this library system. Also as described above, for the most part these respondents do not attempt to bring their elders to the library, even when the library is close by, and even when their elders are mobile and active in other ways. The extent to which libraries will remain important and successful places as the population ages may rest in part on whether they are age-friendly and caring places. This study suggests

the need for further exploration of the non-use behaviour noted by these respondents in order to understand if it is representative and if so, why.

6.3 Opportunities for Further Investigation

This study opens doors to further research in a number of directions. First, to better understand how users interact with the library as clusters of carers and elders, both parties to the relationship need to be included. All data in this study related to the elders' characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes about library use come through the lens of the baby boomer participants. While outside the scope of this study, the perspective of the elders themselves would provide a more complete picture of the role of the public library in supporting the intergenerational relationship.

Second, the needs of non-users should be considered. Are there barriers that prevent potential users, such as baby boomers who were once library users, but are no more, from considering the public library as an institution that might help them meet current and future needs, as aging people and as carers for elderly relatives or friends? If so, how might those barriers be addressed?

This study draws attention to aspects of library-as-place that are important to this set of baby boomer respondents. In particular, their identification of libraries as places where power relationships are made manifest in systems and rules sheds light on the values that need to be considered when designing services attractive to baby boomer patrons. Research might address the link between the public service mission of public libraries and their practices as they prepare for demographic change. This area emerges strongly in the current study because some of these respondents' stories are problematic in terms of experiencing libraries as caring public places:

- A respondent listened to a library employee tell her nonagenarian mother that she couldn't have a card until she came back with ID that had her new address on it.

- A respondent was evicted from her reading table for an unannounced and sparsely attended meeting; it made her feel that “seniors' needs are pretty low on the list of priorities.”
- A respondent found an employee to be unhelpful and rude to her vision-impaired friend who required assistance with finding her holds.

These are anomalies, as respondents often pointed out. The negative stories are more than balanced by extremely positive characterizations of librarians and other library staff, although it is noticeable that for these baby boomer carers, interactions with other people do not feature largely in the library experience they describe. One respondent notes that with self checkout now widely available, the library experience often includes no human interaction at all. As the amount of human contact diminishes, what measures are in place to ensure the quality of the interaction that remains? Obvious though it may be, these anecdotes speak to the ongoing need in a public library for staff to demonstrate a public service orientation.

6.4 Critique of the Study

A number of limitations in the scope and method of this research project can be identified. While the seven participants offered rich data, a study seeking to explore the experience of this user group might have sought a more heterogeneous sample by recruiting in parts of the city that offered more demographic variety in terms of cultural and ethnic background, and income and education level. These characteristics can have implications for what library services are needed, and how they should be provided. A more purposive sample might have included more paid caregivers, thus reducing the anomalous nature of the single paid caregiver respondent in this study. Similarly, more baby boomers who lived with or participated in traditional caregiving with their elders would have offered increased richness and diversity of results. Finally, including baby boomer respondents who are still in the full-

time work-force would have added the important dimension of understanding how time-pressed employed carers interact with the public library.

As described in 3.1.3, the compressed time frame of the study led to at least three impacts. First, when the research approach was reshaped, increasing the number of participants for purposes of greater validity, plans for a Delphi panel to reflect on issues raised in the respondents' data were dropped. Second, more time between interviews might have provided the opportunity for a richer transfer of themes and new ideas from one interview to the next. Finally, the time frame may have compromised the value of the follow up contact with the respondents, in that not enough time elapsed for any meaningful new activity to take place.

Other paradigms and methodological approaches have been used successfully to address questions of library use and experience. While this small study resulted in some rich and detailed data about this topic, other methodological approaches might have provided more comprehensive data. As described in 3.1 above, a mixed methods approach has been used in recent investigations of library as place (eg., May & Black, 2010; Most, 2009); a similar orientation in the current study might have generated results with increased validity, and replicability for further research. Mixed methods research designs have been shown to have the flexibility required to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, providing complementary strategies that compensate for the weaknesses inherent in single strategies, and providing "for collecting more comprehensive evidence than either quantitative or qualitative methods alone" (Most, 2009, p. 81). Within a qualitative paradigm alone, other methodological choices might have added different perspectives on the research problem. For example, an ethnographic element of participant observation, as well as interviews with the elders themselves would have added to the validity of the study; however, as described in 1.6, these research methods were chosen to make the most of limited time and resources, and to capitalize on the researcher's experience with long form interviewing.

6.5 Final Thoughts

The sixty-fifth birthdays of the leading edge of the baby boom generation in 2011 have prompted much attention to the need to plan for a growing population of older adults, with media reports on the “looming challenge” (Cockburn, 2011) of this demographic shift for housing, municipal services, and health care. Public libraries are well-placed to serve a generation that has grown up with libraries, and is a generation that requires information while negotiating a variety of life transitions, including such new roles and relationships with elders. Ensuring that public libraries are places that capture the imaginations and hearts of this massive cohort will be one of the biggest challenges the institution will face in the coming years. In his essay “Regaining Place,” (2007) Charles Osburn argues that place and design are significant parts of the role of library administration: “Place is an essential and inspiring sense, but one that sometimes needs to be aroused and sustained through the right kinds of nurturing. It arguably is among the responsibilities of librarianship to work toward that vision” (p. 73). Through the experiences they describe, the respondents in this study offer ways to think about “the right kind of nurturing” that would enhance that sense of the library as a meaningful and caring place for this large and growing segment of the population.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

Research statement

Purpose and objectives

The objective of this research is to understand the role of the public library in the lives of baby boomers who provide care and /or companionship to an elder, based on the premise that this will be an important subgroup of the aging population. This study receives no financial support. It is being undertaken in fulfillment of the requirements of a master's degree within the School of Information Studies at the University of Ottawa and is being supervised by Professor Mary Cavanagh and Professor Lynne Bowker.

To realize this study, the researcher/interviewer will conduct an interview that will last for 30 to 60 minutes. The researcher will ask questions about how you use the library in your role as someone providing care and or/companionship to an elder. The researcher will audio record the interview. The researcher will conduct interviews with 3 different participants, two interviews per person. All interviews will be conducted in English.

Confidentiality

The names of the respondents will be kept completely confidential. Respondents cannot be identified in any publication. The interview notes and records will be destroyed by the researcher in five years. Only the researcher and her supervisory committee will have access to these notes and records.

Questions

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to ask questions at any time during the interview. You are particularly welcome to ask questions before signing this form. You are free to end the interview at any time and to choose not to answer any question **without having to justify your decision.** **If you wish to withdraw, simply tell the researcher. You will be advised if there is any new information or if there are changes to procedures that might affect your decision to participate.**

Benefits

Your participation will contribute to the expansion of our knowledge of this unique library user group during a time of demographic and technological change.

Ethical Conduct Questions

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5.

Contact information :

Researcher : Wendy Robbins, Master's Student, School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa

Supervisor: Dr. Mary F. Cavanagh, School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa

Respondent's statement (please check if you agree)

- The study described above has been explained to me.
- I agree to participate in the study.
- I can voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I have received a copy of the consent form.
- I agree to have the interview tape recorded.
- I am 18 years old or older.
- I would like to receive a summary of the research results when they become available and here is how you can reach me with this summary:

E-mail address: _____

Respondent: _____

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Recruitment E-mail

Dear ()

I'm writing to ask a favour. I need to recruit some people for my Master's Research Project. (I'm doing a Master's of Information Studies at the University of Ottawa).

YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THEM! But- because you know other people, I want your help.

My project is called "**A PLACE FOR US? BABY BOOMERS, THEIR ELDERS, AND THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.**" I'm interested in what kind of place the library is for this user group in light of the "greying" population.

My project includes in-depth interviews with a small number of **baby-boomer library patrons who provide care and/or companionship to an elder.** (See below for details).

Do you know someone who fits the bill, and might be interested in talking to me? They can look for my poster in the lounge area of the Sunnyside library branch for tear-off contact information. If they are interested, they can contact me directly.

Thanks for your help!

cheers,
Wendy

*****Details*****

Baby boomer: born between 1946 and 1964

Elder: Someone you provide care and/or companionship to who is at least 10 years older than you

Participation: 2 interviews with me of 30 to 60 minutes each, over a two month period

Time frame: mid-April to mid-June

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Appendix C

Interview Guide – Baby boomer/carers

Respondent (Pseudonym) _____

Date of interview _____

State time of interview _____

Finish time of interview _____

Interview location _____

Introduction to first interview

- Present oneself
- Thank the respondent for agreeing to the interview
- Review study purpose and goals
- Present the consent form and go over the information within the form
- Answer any questions the respondent might have
- Tell the respondent to feel free to ask any questions at any moment; that s/he can end her/his participation to the interview at any time s/he wishes; to inform her or him that s/he may choose not to answer a question
- Reassure the respondent that there is no “right” or “wrong” answer. The researcher is interested in his/her experience; s/he is the expert
- Invite the respondent to sign the consent form (two copies) and leave to her/him a copy

Researcher’s introduction following formal consent being provided:

I am interested in your experience as a baby boomer public library user who provides care and/or companionship to an elder. Specifically I would like to explore what kind of place the public library is for you: how it fits into your life as a place, among other places you spend time in, what needs you try to meet at the library for yourself and for the elder in your life, and how well that works.

At any point in our conversation, you may end your participation or decline to answer a question. Please be assured, there is no right or wrong answer. I am interested in hearing, in your words, about your experiences.

Questions will fall into five major themes, but will be open to being guided by interests and responses of participant.

Themes:

- 1) Community context: how the library you use fits into your life in your community

- 2) Personal associations,(memories, assumptions, and preconceptions) about the public library: what kind of a place is it for you and your elder

- 3) Experiential dimension: how do you and your elder experience the library as a place to meet social, educational, informational, cultural or other needs

- 4) Spatial: what are the implications of the physical environment for you and your elder

- 5) Symbolic importance, if any

Note: All interviews will end this way:

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

- Let's talk about the next steps: before we meet again in about six weeks, I'm going to invite you to reflect on what we have talked about today. If you would like to jot down any notes, that would be great: this "reflection guide" (APPENDIX E) has some ideas for things you might consider. Using it is entirely up to you; I won't ask to see it.

Introduction to second interview:

- Review study purpose and goals
- Present the consent form and go over the information within the form
- Answer any questions the respondent might have
- Tell the respondent to feel free to ask any questions at any moment; that s/he can end her/his participation to the interview at any time s/he wishes; to inform her or him that s/he may choose not to answer a question
- Reassure the respondent that there is no "right" or "wrong" answer. The researcher is interested in his/her experience; s/he is the expert
- Invite the respondent to sign the consent form (two copies) and leave to her/him a copy

This interview will be guided by the participants' reflections over the period since the previous interview. The researcher may prompt with subjects from the Reflection guide (APPENDIX E).

The interview will end as follows:

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- An explanation of what happens to the data now
- An offer to review the transcript, once completed (subject to confidentiality form, Appendix G)
- An offer to make the final version of the research available to the participant, once completed
- Appreciation conveyed for their participation

Appendix D: Reflection Note Guide

Reflection Note guide

Between our two interviews, you may find it helpful to keep some notes on your experiences of library use, or any ideas that might occur to you following our first conversation. Please remember that keeping notes is entirely voluntary, and I will not ask to see them. Some of the things you might keep notes on are:

- If and when you visited the library after our first conversation
- If and when you used the library website
- Was the use for yourself or your elder, or both
- What areas of the library did you use; what you noticed
- How well were your needs and/or your elders' needs served
- How did you feel about various aspects of the library during your visit (location, layout, accessibility, public areas, ease of finding what you were looking for)
- What feelings or memories were evoked by using the library
- What kind of interaction, if any, did you have with other people there
- How you felt about your library use compared to other activities you did around the same time
- Anything else you'd like to note

Appendix E: Poster

- *Are you a **BABY BOOMER** (born between 1946 and 1964)?*
- *Are you a **PUBLIC LIBRARY PATRON**?*
- *Do you provide care and/or companionship to an **ELDER**? (a parent, friend, neighbour....someone at least ten years older than you)?*
- *Would you be interested in participating in a research project?*

I am a master's student at the **University of Ottawa School of Information Studies** who is investigating the role the public library plays as a place in the lives of baby boomers who provide care and/or companionship to elders.

Participation will involve **two interviews with me of 30 to 60 minutes each, over a two month period.**

Interested? I'd love to hear from you.

(contact information removed)

Appendix F: Ethics Certificate

File Number: 03-11-01

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/27/2011



Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-Investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Mary F.	Cavanagh	Arts / School of Information Studies	Supervisor
Wendy	Robbins	Arts / School of Information Studies	Student Researcher

File Number: 03-11-01

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: A Place for Us? Baby Boomers, their Elders and the Public Library

<u>Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</u>	<u>Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</u>	<u>Approval Type</u>
05/27/2011	05/26/2012	Is

(Is: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/27/2011



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension [REDACTED] or by e-mail at:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Dr. Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

[REDACTED]