



Bridging the Gap

Underserved Populations and Technology

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About Ambri

Reference librarian at Cedar Falls Public Library in Cedar Falls, Iowa

High interest in assisting those in poverty

Volunteers at Love INC to continually learn more about poverty

Interested in conducting research on various types of poverty

Who Are the Underserved?

My Personal Definition:

Those we do not think of immediately when we examine new technology and services.

ALA Defined Underserved Groups

Adult New and Non-Readers

People with Disabilities

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People

Poor and Homeless People

Incarcerated People and Ex-Offenders

Rural, Native, and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds

Older Adults

Bookmobile Communities

People of Color

Focus Groups for This Presentation

Older Adults

- Expected to steadily increase

Poor and Homeless People

- This population is high in the Cedar Falls, Iowa area

Statistics on Two Underserved Populations

Aging

Defined as 65+

14.5% of US population

15.2% of Black Hawk County

Expecting to consistently increase

Only 3.2% of this population lives in institutions
(nursing homes)

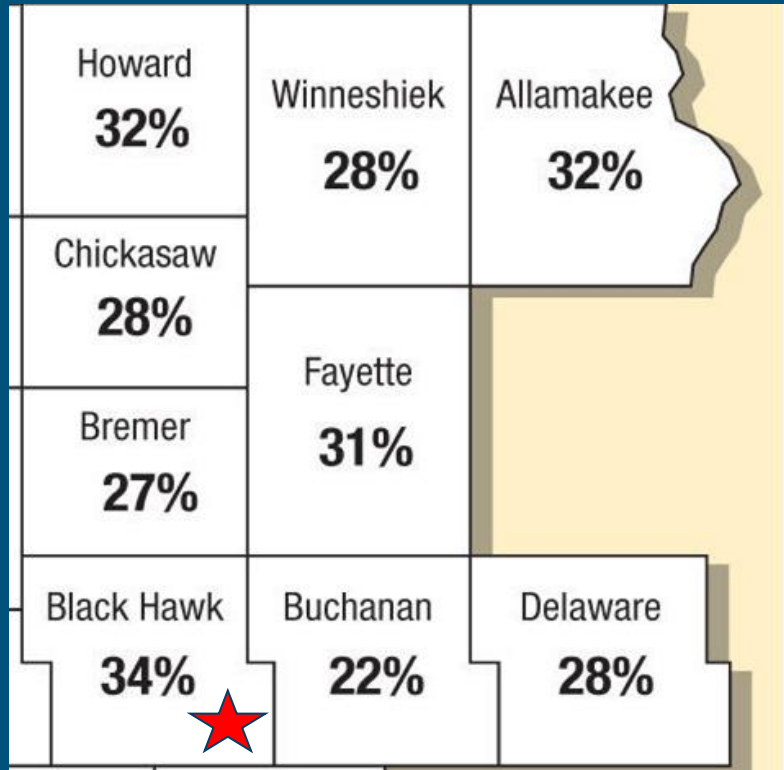
10% of this population lives below the poverty
level

Homeless/Poor

13.5% of the population lives in poverty

34% of Black Hawk County is working but
cannot make ends meet

Percentage of population in Iowa counties that are not able to make ends meet



Our library resides in Black Hawk county. Here is a comparison of our poorer populations compared to counties in our area.

Obstacles These Two Groups Face

Aging

Lack of Exposure to Technology

Lack of Understanding on Relevancy

Do not like small buttons, dexterity is limited
and many have vision issues

In Iowa 5.4-11% of this group have vision issues

Homeless/Poor

Lack of Transportation

Lack of Finances

Lack of Internet Access

In some cases lack of education

Deficits such as these contribute to a feeling of being overwhelmed when faced with new technology and may even cause these groups to be intimidated about using the library.

Teaching Methods

Understanding their perspective will better enable us to teach them about technology we have

Remember that this may be the first time that they are seeing the type of technology you are assisting them with

Many times they just want to do what they need to do, they aren't vested in a full explanation, but we can still use these as a teaching moment for basics such as printing

Teaching Methods

Needs to fit their immediate need. This is especially true for those struggling with homelessness and poverty. Their days are filled with many worries and this group tends to focus on the here and now.

Determine their skill level by asking basic questions such as are you connected to the wifi. This innocent question can help you gauge where their current skill level is at. The 65+ crowd struggles with understanding what wifi is because no one has taken the time to explain the concept to them.

Teaching Methods

Empower rather than do it for them

Repeating directions may need to happen

Encourage them through the learning process. This is key because of a need to have a sense of security when trying a new technology.

If using a tech term determine if they understand the term. If not, explain the meaning of the term.

Planning for New Technology-Makerspace

How can we get the older population involved and not exclude due to some of the barriers we discussed?

Are the homeless/poor populations served by this space or are their financial barriers created by material costs to them?

Is it accessible for people with disabilities?

Planning for New Technology-Public Computers/Software

Space is usually an issue when we look at public computers. How can we serve people that have no other access to a computer while best utilizing space?

How much time should be spent teaching those that have little to no skills with computers?

What software do we take for granted that we will need to purchase so that we can help promote equal access?

Are we inadvertently discriminating if we cut down on this service?

Planning for New Technology-E Resources

When we look at adding a new e-resource do we take technological skill level into account?

Does the resource supplement or replace an existing collection?

If it replaces a collection will everyone still have equal access?

Does the resource reach a wide variety of people or just some?