‘Programmes and Events for Older Adults in Auckland’s Public Libraries’

by

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Abstract
Research Problem:
Auckland’s population is ageing which will have a large impact on services in the city, including its public libraries. Auckland Libraries’ Te Kauroa – Future Directions document has a strong emphasis on children but no explicit section targeting older adults. In light of this, this study examines how the programmes and events offered by Auckland Libraries are meeting the needs of older adults.

Methodology:
Eight staff members from five of Auckland’s public libraries were interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and broken into sections which aligned with the summary of older adults’ needs which were discovered in the literature review.

Results:
Although the majority of libraries do not deliberately target older adults, this is not necessarily required as many older adults are coming to programmes and events that are attractive as a variety of topics and activities are included. Programmes and events encourage interaction and discussion, and cultural and gender differences are recognised.

Implications:
Because this is a small-scale study, the findings cannot be generalised. However, some libraries may find the results useful. Chinese older adults are attending early childhood programmes in the caregiver role for their grandchildren. Libraries have the opportunity to develop this phenomenon through inviting them to read stories in Chinese or through other initiatives. It is important that lifelong learning be a part of some programmes and events offered by Auckland’s libraries and that staff organising programmes and events are conscious of welcoming new-comers.

Future Research:
Future research could examine the factors that influence whether men or other irregular library users attend programmes and events. Future research could examine how outreach programmes and meeting the needs of older adults.

3-6 Descriptors: Public libraries, older adults, programmes, events, needs.
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1. Problem Statement

This study explores whether Auckland’s public libraries are meeting the needs of older adults through the programmes and events that they offer.

Older adults have been chosen because Auckland has an ageing population. According to Statistics New Zealand (n.d.a), “the population of the Auckland region aged 65 and over” will “more than double between 2006 and 2031”. This will mean a larger amount of older adults living in Auckland, creating implications such as a demand for retirement villages and social services (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.a). This study looks how public libraries are responding to this demographic change both presently and in the future in terms of their events and programmes they run.

The second reason older adults have been selected is due to the fact Auckland Libraries has a strong focus on children and children’s services. In its “Te Kauroa - Future Directions” document, older adults are mentioned in the context of housebound services for those who are 85 years and older and cannot go to a physical library (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 31). The document does not have a section dedicated to older adults, however, there is a strong emphasis on children and young people.

As Auckland’s population is ageing, it is problematic that Auckland Libraries does not explicitly address this in its “Te Kauroa - Future Directions” document. As previously mentioned, an increase in those aged 65 and over will result in increased demand on public services in the city. Auckland’s public libraries therefore need to be prepared to serve the needs of older adults through their services, programmes, and events.

This study has potential significance of highlighting how library programmes and events are meeting the needs of older adults and therefore has the possibility of assisting in the creation or adaptation of future library programmes and events.

2. Study Objectives

The objective of this study is to gain an understanding of how Auckland Libraries’
programmes and events meet the needs of older adults. It will research what older adults' needs are in the context of public libraries. Through interviewing staff, the study will find out if the programmes and events offered by Auckland Libraries are meeting the needs of older adults, and if so, how.

3. Research Questions

1. What are older adults' needs in the context of programmes and events at public libraries?
2. Are any of the programmes and events offered by Auckland Libraries specifically targeted to older adults? Why or why not?
3. How are the programmes and events meeting the needs of older adults?

4. Definition of Terms

**Older adults**  
“Older adults” is the term that has been chosen to represent those aged 65 and older. This is based on Nelson Decker's idea that “older adult” is more socially acceptable than other terms such as “senior”, “elderly”, “aged”, and “old” which are not preferred (Kahlert, 2000 as cited in Nelson Decker, 2010, p. 605).

**Needs**  
Older adults have a variety of needs from health needs to social needs to financial needs. This study will focus on social needs that can be applied to a public library context. What these needs are specifically will be found out in the literature review.

**Programmes and events**  
These definitions are taken from the Oxford Dictionaries online. “Programme” refers to “a set of related measures or activities with a particular long-term aim” (Oxford University Press, 2016a). “Event” refers to “a planned public or social occasion” (Oxford University Press, 2016b). In the context of Auckland Libraries, this refers to events published on the “events calendar” on its website (Auckland Council, 2016a) rather than Housebound services or collections that older adults may use such as large print books.
Librarian
For the purposes of this research, librarian refers to someone who works for Auckland Libraries and organises and/or runs programmes and events. Their actual job title may differ, for example they might be a Library Assistant or a Senior Librarian, but it has been decided that the all-encompassing term “librarian” will be used.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Guidelines and Policies

First of all, because this study focuses on Auckland’s public library system, their official documents must be discussed. In 2010, Auckland’s seven city and district councils amalgamated to become Auckland Council. This resulted in seven library systems also becoming one system: Auckland Libraries, consisting of 55 libraries across the greater Auckland region (Auckland Council, 2016b).

Auckland Libraries – Te Kauroa – Future Directions
In 2013, Auckland Libraries released a 60-page document titled “Te Kauroa – Future Directions 2013-2023”, outlining what Auckland Libraries will be focusing on “over the next 10 years and beyond” (Auckland Libraries, 2013. p. 1). It shows what its priorities are and its connection to the Auckland Plan (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 1). These priorities are divided into six “focus areas” where “children and young people” are the only demographic to have its own focus area and has an outcome of “every child a reader, every child a library member” (Auckland Libraries, 2013, pp. 21-22). There is a strong focus on child “reading, literacy, and discovery” (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 22).

This strong focus on children and young people is extremely positive and should not be disregarded. As mentioned further in the below section which examines Auckland Council’s Auckland Plan, children are the “top priority” (Auckland Council, 2016c). However, Auckland’s population is ageing. According to Statistics New Zealand, the amount of people aged 65 and over will more than double between 2006 and 2031,
with the Rodney region having the highest percentage aged 65 and over (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.a). This has various implications for society, such as the need for more rest homes and retirement villages, and the need to plan for social services (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.a).

Auckland Council – Auckland Plan
Auckland Libraries’ parent organisation, Auckland Council released the city-wide “Auckland Plan” in 2014, outlining the city’s plan for the next 30 years. It touches on many areas of society and briefly mentions older adults in several capacities, the most important being in the context of Auckland’s demographics. Although Auckland’s population is “currently relatively young” and children are the “top priority” (Auckland Council, 2016c), the number of older people in Auckland will “rise dramatically” with a potential 400% rise in those 85 years and older by 2040 (Auckland Council, 2016c). The Auckland Plan acknowledges the fact many people over 65 will be “fit and active” and states “we need to recognise the evolving nature of being ‘older’, and value the contribution of our older residents” (Auckland Council, 2016c). Moreover, it is worthwhile including the fact that Auckland Council has a Seniors Advisory Panel which will “identify and communicate the interests and preferences of seniors in Auckland” (Auckland Council, 2016d)

Public Libraries of New Zealand – 2012-2017 Strategic Framework
Another perspective to consider is that of Public Libraries of New Zealand. This is an organisation that represents public libraries in New Zealand and provides guidelines for various aspects of libraries. Their 2012-2017 Strategic Framework occasionally mentions older adults. One key point raised is that many older adults are struggling financially due to financial companies collapsing, resulting in a large number of people “in a significantly poorer state than expected” (Public Libraries of New Zealand, 2012, p. 13). It predicts that this group can be “expected to rely more heavily on libraries for their reading and access to the internet” due to the fact this “growing age group” is a “significant user of public libraries” (Public Libraries of New Zealand, 2012, p. 13).

Ministry of Social Development – Older New Zealanders: Healthy, Independent, Connected and Respected
The Ministry of Social Development has created a 42-page document from 2013 focusing on older New Zealanders. It contains ten positive ageing principles, seven of which can be applied to this study due to their relevance. These are:

“1. empower older people to make choices that enable them to live a satisfying life and lead a healthy lifestyle
2. provide opportunities for older people to participate in and contribute to family, whānau and community
3. reflect positive attitudes to older people
4. recognise the diversity of older people and ageing as a normal part of the lifecycle
5. appreciate the diverse cultural identity of older people living in New Zealand
6. recognise the difference issues facing men and women
7. enable older people to take responsibility for their personal growth and development through changing circumstances” (Ministry of Social Development, 2013, p. 6).

Sloan and Vincent – Library Services for Older People: Good Practice Guide
Similarly, Sloan and Vincent (2009) also provide a useful framework which this study will draw from. They provide a number of guidelines and useful points relating to older people in libraries in the United Kingdom in the context of avoiding social exclusion. They state that “libraries have a strong role to play in supporting the wellbeing agenda, particularly in terms of stimulation, bringing older people together, reducing isolation, and socialisation.” (Sloan and Vincent, 2009, p. 4). Furthermore, they also recognise the importance of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and use these principles as a framework for “identifying the needs of older people in the community” and “as library users” (Sloan and Vincent, 2009, p. 5). These principles are: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, and dignity” (Sloan and Vincent, 2009, p. 5).

American Library Association – Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults
The American Library Association released its most recent version of its Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults in 2008. There are seven sections which reflect a “basic principle in library services to older adults” and also
“recognizes this diversity and discourages stereotyping in planning collections, programs and services for this growing population” (American Library Association, 2008, p. 209). The sections are as follows:

1. Acquire current data about the older population and incorporate it into planning and budgeting.
2. Ensure that the special needs and interests of older adults in your community are reflected in the library's collections, programs, and services.
3. Make the library's collections and physical facilities safe, comfortable and inviting for all older adults.
4. Make the library a focal point for information services to older adults.
5. Target the older population in library programming.
6. Reach out to older adults in the community who are unable to travel to the library.

Although all of these points are important in the context of older adults using the library, numbers 1, 2, 5 are the most relevant to this study as they touch on programming for older adults or planning. Each of these sections has a number of relevant points for example “plan programs for specific age groups or generations within the older population, being aware that interests and information needs vary greatly” and “select themes for programs that deal with specific interests of older adults identified through user surveys, focus groups, or circulation statistics reflecting borrowing patterns by older adults” (American Library Association, 2008, p. 211).

These abovementioned points and guidelines will form a framework that this study will draw upon on as they provide crucial information on older people's needs and the issues they face.

5.2 Cost of Providing for Older Adults

Several overseas studies have looked at older adults and public libraries. Jones (2006) looks at the impact of an ageing population on coastal public libraries in New
South Wales. He looks at various implications for public libraries in coastal communities with large numbers of older adults such as stock usage, staffing levels and pressures, lending pressures, and collection pressures (Jones, 2006, pp. 45-47). Jones concludes that:

“- stock is discarded at a higher rate, most likely due to heavier usage
- more of the library budget is dedicated towards material for an ageing population, in particular in the area of large print items. These are significantly more expensive than standard print items
- staff at coastal libraries dedicate more of their time to basic circulation services” (Jones, 2006, p. 49)

Jones' findings are useful to include because they explore the financial side of running a library with a higher number of older adult users and how this impacts on staff time. This study acknowledges this information but also recognises that it does not align with the scope of the study. Jones examines the cost of large print books and audiobooks and looks at how much staff time is spent on performing basic circulation duties. However, this study is focused on how programmes and events offered at public libraries are meeting the needs of older adults.

5.3 New Zealand Context

Several overseas studies have looked at the ageing population and the impact for public libraries but there is little known about older adults' library needs in New Zealand. Ryder (2001) has conducted a small-scale study on services to elderly in four of Auckland's cities pre-amalgamation. He compares what the four library systems offer in terms of services to elderly patrons and finds that all offer a set of “core services”: mobile library services, audiobooks, large print, and housebound services (Ryder, 2001, p. 108).

Ryder also explains that on top of these core services, some libraries offer additional services such as magnifying glasses or sheets and “special events for elderly members of the community” (Ryder, 2001, p. 114). These “special events” are worth noting as they provide an insight into some of the programmes and events available
at some of Auckland's public libraries pre-amalgamation. However, the study is now out of date because Auckland's public library system has dramatically changed since 2001 with the 2010 amalgamation. Furthermore, Ryder's methodology includes “historical research using a combination of document analysis and surveys” (Ryder, 2001, p. 17). While he manages to gather a large amount of data, it is not in-depth in the way interviewing people would be.

5.4 Social Isolation

Sutton (2009) also provides an Australian perspective where currently 1 in 8 Australians is aged 65 or older. By the middle of the 21st century, this will rise to 1 in 4. This creates problems for various parts of society (Sutton, 2009, p. 377), and can be summed up as “threats to our quality of life” (Sutton, 2009, p. 378). However, Sutton states that libraries have a strong role to play in “supporting the wellbeing agenda”, such as through stimulation and socialisation (Sutton, 2009, p. 379).

Sutton also explains how social isolation can be a problem for older adults and that certain factors such as geographic location and linguistic or cultural differences can increase the risk of social exclusion (National Seniors Australia, 2008, as cited in Sutton, 2009, p. 381).

This ties into a Singaporean study by Luyt and Ho Swee, who look at Singapore’s growing ageing population and the public library system. They look at four key issues: gender disparities, class differences, the effects of ageism, and an instrumental view of reading (Luyt and Ho Swee, 2011, p. 204). Ageism, both from society and an internalised form of ageism from the older adults who were interviewed, is discussed throughout the article. Luyt and Ho Swee discover that respondents themselves believed that reading programmes would be “no use” to older adults as they would forget what they have learnt after “an hour” (Luyt and Ho Swee, 2011, p. 209). These respondents are claiming there is a problem with their ability to retain information.

Luyt and Ho Swee note that in their own review of the literature, they find that the “problems the elderly face are not so much physical or mental, but social” (Luyt and
Ho Swee, 2011, p. 209). Interestingly, in a later section, they discuss the fact many older adults who use the library go there as “simply somewhere to go” (Luyt and Ho Swee, 2011, p. 211), hinting at the theme of social isolation.

The theme of social isolation is also apparent in Nelson Decker's article, where she looks at baby boomers in the United States and how prepared public libraries are for the increase in older people using their systems. She focuses on three categories: social needs, programming needs, and technological needs (Nelson Decker, 2010, p. 606). Nelson Decker explains how social needs of baby boomers are based on their current lives before they enter retirement and how this will affect their needs later on as they age (Nelson Decker, 2010, p. 606). Furthermore, she states that entering retirement means a work location is lost, and that the library can fill this “location void” (Joseph, 2009 and Bundy, 2006 as cited in Nelson Decker, 2010, p. 607). This is also found in Sutton's study who explains how “leaving the workforce greatly reduces their contact with other people” and that libraries provide a myriad of opportunities such as volunteering and book clubs (Sutton, 2009, p. 382).

For many people, retirement and leaving a job means much less contact with other people. Libraries offer volunteering opportunities, book clubs, information about local activities, displays promoting local organisations and activities (for example, men’s shed), programmes (for example, author talks) and the “opportunity to engage with staff” (Sutton, 2009, p. 382). This brings up the idea of libraries being a place to combat social isolation and interact with others.

The idea of the public library being a replacement work location is also expressed by Williamson et al. who are another group who have examined Baby Boomers. They state that Baby Boomers are a “crossover generation” who embody “characteristics of previous and later generations” (Williamson et al., 2010, p. 179). They employ a qualitative methodological approach through focus groups and interviews and their findings can be categorised into several groups, the most relevant being social needs. Williamson et al. find out that their respondents see the public library as “potentially a community social hub” and as a place for “more than borrowing their beloved books” (Williamson et al., 2010, p. 187).
An interesting part of Williamson et al.’s findings is that although there is discussion about public libraries being a community social hub, there is a warning against public libraries becoming “de facto senior citizens clubs” and that there should be “intergenerational mingling” so that younger people and older adults interact with each other (Williamson et al., 2010, pp. 187-188). This study acknowledges this point and sets out to discover whether “intergenerational mingling” occurs at programmes and events offered by Auckland Libraries.

Nelson Decker (2010) and Williamson et al. (2010) highlight some highly relevant points related to whether library programmes and events are encouraging older adults to come to the library once they have stopped working to fill the “location void”. This raises the question of whether programmes and events are covering topics that are varied and of interest to those of the cusp of retirement or whether a “one size fits all” approach is applied.

In 2007, Koopman-Boyden and Waldegrave (2009) edited a report which was published by The Population Studies Centre at the University of Waikato and the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit in Wellington. This report is about enhancing wellbeing in 65 to 84 year olds in New Zealand and adds to the points made is section 5.1 by the Ministry of Social Development (2013), the United Nations, and Sloan and Vincent (2009).

The first key point is the idea that “the leisure and recreation pursuits undertaken in one’s earlier years are more likely to be continued in one’s older years – older people tend to continue participating in activities with which they are familiar for security as well as reassurance” (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007 as cited in Koopman-Boyden and Waldegrave, 2009, p. 119). It raises the issue of whether Auckland Libraries is encouraging those not yet at retirement age into the library with events and programmes so that they will continue to use the library into their later years.

The second point by Koopman-Boyden and Waldegrave (2013) relates directly to social isolation. They state that older adults are more likely to engage in leisure activities if they live with a spouse/partner, further explaining how organisations for older people “and those interested in encouraging them into leisure activities might
more diligently seek out those who live alone” (Koopman-Boyden and Waldegrave, 2009, p. 131). Although this is an important point, it has been decided that finding out whether Auckland Libraries targets those who are living alone and encourages them to attend programmes and events does not reflect the purpose of this study.

5.5 Literature Review Summary

Through analysing Sutton (2009), Luyt and Ho Swee (2011), Nelson Decker (2010), Williamson et al. (2010), and Koopman-Boyden and Waldegrave (2009)’s works, several themes and attitudes are clearly apparent. The following points provide a summary of the issues older adults face:

1. Public libraries are seen as community social hubs or places to go when an adult has retired and no longer has a work location
2. Public libraries should not become “de facto senior citizens’ clubs” or places to sleep, they should be places where all generations socialise together
3. There is an internalised attitude towards ageing that sees some older people believe they have difficulties retaining information they have learnt at a library programme or event
4. Older adults continue to pursue their leisure activities from their earlier years into their older years
5. Older adults are more likely to engage in leisure activities if they live with a spouse or partner

It is clear that social isolation is a huge risk for older adults and there is a need to prevent this. This study draws on the key points noted above as it looks at Auckland Libraries’ events and programmes and how they are meeting the needs of older adults and present and in the future. These points show some of the issues older adults face which can be analysed to show what older adults’ needs are in a public library context.

Furthermore, these points from the analysis of the literature form the basis for analysing the extent to which older adults’ needs are met through programmes and events offered at Auckland’s public libraries. Therefore, the interview questions (see
Appendix C and Appendix D) are based on these points and provide a framework and structure for the interviews.

6. Methodology

This study is qualitative due to the fact there is a “real world” focus that involves “capturing and studying the complexity” of phenomena in “natural settings” (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013, p. 139). For this study, this involves interviewing staff from Auckland Libraries who are involved in organising and/or running programmes and events.

6.1 Gathering Information about Older Adults’ Needs

Gathering information about what older adults’ needs are has been from the existing literature. Several studies have already been discussed in the literature review of this study which outline several key points relating to older adults’ needs. Furthermore, a number of government, council, and other reports and guidelines have been analysed to form a picture of some of the issues older adults face and what the role of the public library is in supporting these people. As mentioned in section 5.5, these studies, reports, and guidelines form the framework in which the interview questions are based upon.

6.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were chosen over other data-gathering methods such as surveys because they allow a small number of participants to provide in-depth answers. The study’s objective is to gain an understanding of how Auckland Libraries is meeting the needs of older adults through its programmes and events. This requires the researcher to interview staff members individually and ask a list of questions. The semi-structured approach also allows the researcher to ask a set number of questions but also be open to asking related questions based on the participant’s responses that aren’t from the prepared list. Although the first part of many of the questions were closed, for example “do the programmes and events you’re involved in deliberately target older adults?”, the second part always included an opportunity to elaborate, for example “why do you think this is?”. A variety of
open-ended probing questions were used to “elicit further information” (Ayres, 2008, p. 2) and allow the participant to respond freely.

Other qualitative approaches were considered such as a focus group. This would mean interviewing several participants at once and allowing them to share their ideas with the group and the researcher. However, there were too many downsides and risks involved in this approach. Firstly, certain participants may dominate the discussion. This puts pressure on the researcher to moderate the focus group skilfully which is a risk when the researcher is unexperienced. Certain participants dominating the discussion stops others from stating their opinions and may stop an in-depth response. Secondly, some participants may feel uncomfortable in a focus group and will not participate in the study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013, p. 157). Furthermore, there are logistical issues to consider such as “bringing individuals together in a set place and at a specific time” which may be difficult and incur travel costs as well as costs for hiring a room (Barbour, 2008 p.3).

Eight Auckland Libraries staff were interviewed. This sample depended on permission being granted and the availability of staff to interview. The libraries in which the staff work for have been chosen partly due to availability but also due to the fact they offer programmes or events that could be viewed as targeting older adults such as “book chat” groups. This indicates both convenience due to permission and availability and purposive sampling as the sample “must be tied” to the research objectives (Palys, 2008, p. 2). In this case, it was necessary that staff who were involved in programmes and events that potentially target older adults were approached to ensure the study objectives were met. Initially, it was decided that staff from libraries which serve a higher proportion of over 65s would be interviewed. However, in order to ensure confidentiality, libraries from a variety of areas were approached, not necessarily those who serve a higher proportion of over 65s.

After the Manager of Digital and Service Development at Auckland Libraries expressed permission for library staff to be interviewed, library managers were emailed in the first instance to explain the nature of the study and ask permission to interview staff who organise and/or run programmes or events at their library. Once
staff members agreed to participate, further information about the study was emailed to them. During this time, an application was sent to the School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee and was approved in July 2016. Participants were sent information and consent forms to read and complete (see Appendix A and Appendix B).

The majority of the interviews were held at the participants’ workplace. One interview took place at the participant’s house at their request. The interviews were semi-structured as a prepared list of questions were asked with “one or more individually tailored questions to get clarification or probe a person’s reasoning” (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013, p. 190). This allowed the interviewer to pick up on certain points the participant touched that were deemed relevant.

Participants were given a copy of the interview questions along with some background information about older adults’ needs before the interviews were conducted. They were also given some points from the research that were referred to at certain points in the interview. This allowed the participants to prepare for the interview and understand the context of the questions. There were two sets of interview questions: one for the six participants who were librarians (refer to Appendix C) and one for the two participants who were library managers (refer to Appendix D). The decision to have two sets of questions was due to the fact the managers may not necessarily run the programmes and events their library offers but may have useful information about organising them and will provide a managerial perspective. Because of this, their question list varied slightly to the librarians’ question list.

Each participant was reminded that the interview was confidential, the library they work for would not be named (only Auckland Libraries as a whole would be named), and that the only people with access to the interview transcript and audio recordings would be the researcher and the researcher’s supervisor.

The interview questions were divided into five sections: general questions about the types of programmes and events offered, questions about interaction, community, and participation, questions about personal interests and growth, questions about
gender and cultural differences, and a final concluding section.

The interviews were recorded digitally by the researcher's Dictaphone and cell phone with permission from the participants. After each interview, the recordings were played back and transcribed into written form on the researcher's personal laptop as accurately as possible and sent to each participant to read through. Interviews varied from 14 minutes to 28 minutes in duration.

7. Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

7.1 Assumptions
There is an assumption that the participants have answered all of the questions honestly and to the best of their knowledge. The second assumption is that Auckland Libraries is honouring their Te Kauroa - Future Directions document.

7.2 Limitations
The gathering information about older adults' needs was via the literature, rather than by interviewing older adults. Although this is a limitation, it is not necessarily a weakness as there are many studies, reports, guidelines, and statistics that show evidence of what older adults' needs are in the context of other public library systems with similar cultural backgrounds to New Zealand such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

Allowing the participants to have a copy of the interview questions, a summary of what older adults' needs are, and the points from the research before the interview could be interpreted as a limitation. Being allowed to read over this information in advance could have resulted in participants preparing answers that portray themselves in a particular way or answering in a way they believe is how the researcher wants to questions to be answered. To counter this, the question list also acknowledged that are no right or wrong answers and that answers are purely the participants' observations and opinions and that is it not always possible to know a customer's age and so observations will be based on guesses that a customer is an older adult.
Furthermore, at the beginning of every interview, these two acknowledgements were repeated. It was also stated that the researcher is not trying to prove something either way; the researcher is simply finding out what is occurring at Auckland Libraries’ programmes and events so participants should not try and “please” the researcher. Because of this, the researcher has taken the stance that all participants were honest in their answers.

7.3 Delimitations
It has been deliberately decided that older adults in Auckland will be researched, rather than older adults from all of New Zealand. Although this study is designed to find out how Auckland Libraries is meeting the needs of its older adult population through its programmes and events, it is not feasible to gather information from all 55 libraries in Auckland. For this reason, the study was based around five of Auckland's libraries.

8. Results
A variety of programmes and events were discussed throughout the eight interviews. Some, such as Book Chat groups, craft groups, English classes, and author talks and guest speakers were common among several libraries. Others were unique to the individual library, including:

- a programme for customers on how to use a Chinese messaging app
- a digital device outreach programme
- a volunteer group maintaining a small garden at the library
- a seniors’ computer class
- a Chinese Chess group

Some of these are not listed on the Auckland Libraries website, however they have been included because they fit the definition of either a programme or event as outlined in section 4.

8.1 Targeting and Numbers
Targeting and Attracting Older Adults

The most important interview question relates to the second research question of this study which asks whether any of the programmes and events are specifically targeted to older adults, and why or why not. Five out of the eight participants stated that their programmes and events do not deliberately target older adults. The reasons for this were that older adults “just come” to events that are promoted to all adults and one participant believed this was due to the high percentage of retired people in the area, or that the timing of the event – a weekday morning, meant more older adults were likely to come.

Two participants explicitly stated that their programme targeted older adults because they have found that older adults are keen to learn about digital technology and so providing a programme to these people meant that their need was being met. One explained that their digital device outreach programme deliberately targets older adults at a local retirement village because of the need for the library’s “presence” at the retirement village.

Following on from this question, all participants believed that their programmes and events attract older adults. A key theme of timing was revealed to the reason behind this. Participants stated that older adults attend programmes and events on weekday mornings because they have the spare time to do so. One participant explained that through their own involvement with research, they have talked to older adults who have stated they prefer to come to the library in the morning and “leave the library for children and parents” in the afternoon.

In contrast, one participant explained how their library offers many events in the early evening after the library has closed because older adults might “relish the idea of an outing” after a day without work, compared to workers who may not feel like going out at night.

Other reasons for attracting older adults included one participant explaining how older adults she has worked with always want to learn and do not give up when attending the digital device outreach programme. Another explained that the programmes and events that the library offers attracts older adults because of the
variety of topics covered at talks or simply because attendees are interested in books and will therefore attend Book Chat groups.

**Auckland Libraries' Te Kauroa - Future Directions Document and Library Policy**

When interviewing the two managers, it was clear that both were well aware of Auckland Libraries’ Te Kauroa - Future Directions document. Both were aware of the focus on children, with one stating that the focus is “marvellous” and “absolutely fantastic” but should not be at the “expense of not putting as much into adults”. The other pointed out that the Future Directions document is guided by the “Universal Access Principles”. They explained that this means everyone, “where practical, has the same ability to experience the services and products and programmes in the library”. Despite their knowledge in this area, and with them further explaining that the Te Kauroa - Future Directions document touches on those with access difficulties and those who are older and how Auckland Libraries should serve those people, they did believe that older adults need to be targeted.

In light of this, one manager said their library has some sort of policy or strategy in relation to programmes and events for adults as they deliberately time their programmes and events to occur on a weekday morning. This is because of the manager’s personal involvement in talking to older adults about using the library.

The question relating to Te Kauroa – Future Directions was not part of the interview for librarians as its intention was to find out a managerial perspective on organising programmes and events.

**8.2 Interaction, Community, and Participation**

**Interaction and Discussion**

When asked about whether there are opportunities for attendees to interact with each other, the most striking point was the inclusion of free tea, coffee, and biscuits at certain events. Those whose events included refreshments commented that it was part of the welcome before an event officially begins and can actually be an
“icebreaker” as it welcomes people and “they relax” because it is an “old fashioned thing which people like”. One stated that those who do not take a drink or a biscuit still “mill around” indicating its social element.

One participant explained how it can involve “some effort” in getting their programme to actually begin because the attendees come early to chat and get caught up in their conversations. They also chat after the programme has officially finished.

When asked about interaction and discussion between people attending programmes and events, all six of the participants who run programmes and events stated they had observed older adults interacting with each other. Two explained that this is because they have got to know each other and they are chatting about things unrelated to the programme or event they are attending.

For those who had witnessed older adults interacting with younger people (“mingling” between the generations), the likelihood of this occurring depended on the type of event and the time of day in which it occurred. For example, one participant who ran a Book Chat group on a weekday morning explained that the older adults aged in their 80s “interact fine” with the “younger” adults who are in their 50s. Another explained that young families use the library more on the weekend whereas older adults will come during the week. One participant talked about their experience at the previous library they worked at where older adults taught younger people things such as knitting, which they explain was successful, however, they did not state what day in the week or time of day this occurred.

All of the six librarians who run programmes and events noticed that there were “regular” attendees. One explained that this was because a group of people had started the group themselves. Other reasons were that the regulars were locals so coming to the library routinely was convenient, or that they enjoy the social aspect of the programme.

This interaction extends to friendships being formed at some programmes and events. As explained during the interviews, participants did not need to know if people were actually “friends”, but more like whether they had observed certain
people catching up before an event or sitting next to certain people during a programme, for example. The majority of the participants who run programmes and events commented on the fact they had observed certain people “holding places” for others or making a “beeline” for a particular person. Several explained that they are in the company of likeminded people with likeminded interests and are in a location where they can chat and share information with such people. One participant stated customers from their event have met up afterwards for lunch or a coffee even after having coffee and biscuits at the event.

Many participants explained how they have observed staff interacting with customers attending their programmes and events. This was generally seen as a positive aspect of hosting programmes and events as it created a “work friendship” with customers. One participant explained that talking to Chinese customers at their Mandarin Book Chat was an opportunity to discover that they wanted to find out other things from the library such as information about learning English or things to do in New Zealand. On the other hand, it was also acknowledged by a participant that customers turning into “acquaintances” for staff could run the risk of things becoming “quite cliquey”. They were concerned about creating a balance of welcoming new people and “projecting a very friendly face” to those they had already welcomed.

8.3 Personal Interests and Growth

**Attitudes Towards Ageing**

Participants had a range of experiences to talk about when asked about whether they had observed customers talking about not remembering things due to their age. Participants who ran programmes involving digital technology explained that older adults would talk about being “slow” or that they struggle to remember things. Both participants emphasised the point that these customers keep coming back to the library programme as staff point out and prove that they are remembering what they have previously learnt.

Another key point relates to customers who face language barriers. Two participants talked about Chinese older adults who are concerned about ageing as well as
memory problems. One pointed out that it is people’s attitudes towards memory decline which is important. They explained that as people get older, they get “wiser” and have more life experience and libraries have the opportunity to benefit from this wisdom. Despite the language barrier which may impede Chinese older adults’ ability to enjoy some programmes and events, providing opportunities for them to connect with the community and having Chinese staff members available is seen as beneficial and therefore “language won’t be a problem”. For example, one participant explained that their library has a small garden which is maintained by volunteers, including older adults. One older adult uses the garden as an opportunity to practise their English, communicate with New Zealanders, and learn about what herbs people would like to take from the library. This is a sound example of an older adult using the library to connect with the community, learn about plants, and to reduce the language barrier.

**Topics and Activities of Interest to a Variety of Older Adults**

The other question participants were asked related to the topics or activities on offer that would be of interest to a variety of older adults. Those who were involved with Book Chat groups all explained that a variety of genres were discussed, from “really light stuff to very heavy stuff”, both fiction and non-fiction: “anything goes”. Two participants explained that their Book Chat group was an opportunity not only to talk about books, but that the books create a platform to share information about their lives and experiences.

Those who were involved with author talks and other guest speakers all stated the topics were wide-ranging with one manager explicitly stating that this was deliberate. Participants talked about different authors or speakers attracting different sorts of attendees. For example, one participant explained how talks about “something practical” such as saving for retirement will attract “quite a good mix” whereas a talk related to the “new-age” will attract older women. Another talked about organising talks that they know work for the local area, namely local authors and speakers.

One participant picked up on the point about older adults being more likely to engage in leisure activities if they live with a spouse or partner. They explained that they have observed “just as many people coming who have a partner as not having a
8.4 Gender and Cultural Differences

Gender Differences
The majority of participants acknowledged that men and women attend different programmes and events to each other. Women were more likely to attend craft groups and guest speaker talks. Despite many participants stating that more women attended Book Chat groups, this was the one programme that several participants talked about that did have male attendees. One participant spoke of two or three male “regulars” at their Book Chat group of about twenty people. However, three participants shared the idea that men do not want to discuss books, especially at a regular, organised event. One manager explained that for most men, they have not had the experience of attending an event like a Book Chat group in their life so it would be unusual for them to begin attending one once they reach retirement age.

Furthermore, they believed it is important to have “unstructured” reading of newspapers and a space for them to do this, such as a newspaper room, where they can read a newspaper or magazine, “meet their acquaintances, have a little chat, and head off”. This comment connects to the theme of reducing social isolation in libraries as the participant is talking about a space in the library that is attractive to male customers where they can connect with other “regular” newspaper or magazine readers.

Participants stated that neither women nor men were explicitly targeted. One participant explained that they “target the subject for the need from the community”. Whether men or women attend is based on the nature of the programme or event. A participant who runs a digital device outreach programme explained that “everyone is welcome” and that whoever wants to come, comes. They also wondered whether men were not coming to the digital device outreach programme because they were embarrassed, uncomfortable, or “too proud”. Two participants remarked that women outlive men so women may attend more library programmes and events purely because they are alive for longer.
**Different Cultures**

Most participants stated there were people from different cultures at their programme or event. The explanation for the cultural mixes depended on the type of programme or event that was on offer. For example, three participants talked about customers who could speak English or had South African or English backgrounds and could presumably speak English and were able to take advantage of English medium programmes and events. Two participants described their customers as the “same” or monocultural. When probed further, they explained that they were New Zealand European. However, it is not known if this was based on observation and some customers may have had other English speaking backgrounds, just as the aforementioned participant stated.

One participant who runs a Mandarin Book Chat group explained that even though attendees may be from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan and have their “differences”, they still share the same culture.

These cultural differences were often a point of discussion during programmes and events. Four participants talked about cultural differences being used as a reason to talk to others. For example, one participant held an author talk where the author’s book was about a “clash” of cultures. While customers were having tea and coffee, they were able to acknowledge their own languages and cultures, and ask other people what their experiences were, especially older adults asking younger Chinese men what their experiences were “to see the other side”. Moreover, during a Book Chat group, one participant had noted that sometimes people will talk about their experiences in England or Africa and that this is of interest to other attendees. Another participant stated that if other cultures and experiences are brought up at guest speaker events, then people are “really interested” and want to listen to what others have to say.

An interesting point is the attendance at early childhood programmes such as Rhymetime by Chinese grandparents. Two participants explained that even though these programmes are for children, grandparents are attending in place of the children’s parents in the caregiver role. One explained that many of these grandparents have moved to New Zealand from China to look after their
grandchildren and the other stated that attending children’s programmes provided an opportunity to connect with each other before, during, and after the session.

Te Kauroa – Future Directions touches on the idea of “grandparents or other older people reading stories in their own language” (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 42). This is also picked up by Sloan and Vincent (2009) who state that “some libraries are finding that seniors now seem to be acting more as carers for their grandchildren and they have found that events targeted at older people are more successful if they include children’s activities” (Sloan and Vincent, 2009, p. 26).

8.5 Concluding Section

Auckland’s Ageing Population
Participants were told the statistic on Auckland’s ageing population and whether they were aware of this fact, and how they think this will impact their library in the future, especially when organising programmes and events. Five out of the eight participants were aware that Auckland’s population is ageing. Nearly all thought about how this would impact their library. The most common responses were related to offering more as more people would be around to attend, the view of serving older adults as a “privilege” and a “fantastic opportunity”, and concerns about having adequate space or rooms. Two participants also discussed outreach opportunities and explained they have had discussions with staff about going to large retirement villages and holding sessions on eBooks or doing Book Chat groups in the community, for example at a café.

Both managers talked about the implications for their library, in particular when organising programmes and events. Both saw the opportunity for the library to hold programmes that encourage ongoing learning in older adults, especially, as one manager pointed out, that many retirees in the future will have worked with computers throughout their work life and that new technology will be in use by then. They stated that this provides an opportunity for both staff and older adults to keep their minds “adaptable and plastic” and continue to learn.

One believed that Auckland’s population is not ageing “evenly” and that a “library
wide blanket policy” would not be appropriate when dealing with demographic change. They further explained that their library’s catchment area is ageing “slightly faster” than other parts of Auckland. They also considered a “range of factors” such as perceptions of security and perceptions of comfort which may not be “immediately obvious”. The manager explained that security and comfort relates to things like the earlier timing of events, appropriate furniture, and LED lighting, all of which will impact older adults’ decisions to attend a library programme or event.

Final Comments
All participants were given the opportunity to discuss anything else they felt was relevant. Responses were varied; some answers were more practical where they discussed the need for more outreach opportunities or the need to “do more” for older adults. Others were more philosophical, explaining that ageing is “never, ever” a problem and that older adults should not be “left behind” as things become more “digital”. One participant wanted to find out more information about why it is difficult to get men involved in library programmes and events. They also wanted to get feedback at the guest speaker events to find out what sort of topics would be of interest.

9. Discussion

9.1 Targeting and Attracting Older Adults
Research Question two asks “are any of the programmes and events offered by Auckland Libraries specifically targeted to older adults? Why or why not?” A key part of this section of the results is the revelation that five out of the eight participants stated that their programmes and events do not deliberately target older adults.

The American Library Association encourages libraries to “target the older population in library programming” (American Library Association, 2008, p. 212). However, participants explained that there was no need to deliberately target older adults because they “just come” to programmes and events that are targeted to all adults. It may be that certain programmes and events attract older adults because of the timing. It was common for programmes and events that have older adults attend to be held on a weekday morning. Another reason may be connected to the local
demographics. If an area around a local library has a higher number of older adults, then it is likely that many of these older adults will attend programmes and events at the library. One participant explained that the area around their library is ageing “slightly faster” than other areas.

On the other hand, two programmes deliberately target older adults. These are the seniors’ computer class and the digital device outreach programme. Participants involved explained that older adults are targeted because of the need for the library to have a “presence” at the retirement village and because they felt the need to provide more for those who were coming to the library for one-on-one Book a Librarian sessions. They also found many of these older adults were “really hungry” to learn about digital technologies such as downloading eBooks and wanted to be part of the “digital world”.

9.2 Interaction and Reducing Social Isolation

The interview questions for this section were designed to found out how much, if any, interaction occurs between older adults, older adults and younger people, and older adults and staff members. They also look into friendships and those who regularly attend programmes and events (“regulars”). This is because of the findings from the literature review that show libraries are “potentially a community social hub” and as a place for “more than borrowing their beloved books” (Williamson et al., 2010, p. 187) and that “problems the elderly face are not so much physical or mental, but social” (Luyt and Ho Swee, 2011, p. 209).

The findings show that older adults interact with each other and with staff. Some had witnessed older adults interacting with those who are younger, just as Williamson et al. encouraged. They explain that public libraries should not be “de facto senior citizens’ clubs” and that libraries should be somewhere where “intergenerational mingling” occurs (Williamson et al., 2010, p. 188). The inclusion of free tea, coffee, and biscuits was perceived to be a drawcard by many participants. It acts as an “icebreaker” and provides the opportunity for customers to sit and talk to each other before a programme or event officially begins. All six librarians who run programmes and events talked about “regulars” attending with many believing some attendees had formed friendships with others. There is clearly a large amount of interaction at
programmes and events, therefore the library is providing a location for older adults to socialise with others with likeminded interests.

9.3 Personal Interests and Growth
Two points arose from the questions about personal growth and interests. The first is that of attitudes towards ageing, both from older adults, and society as a whole. The second is related to language barriers. Attitudes towards ageing were not as strong as those found by Luyt and Ho Swee who concluded that there is ageism from society and an “internalised form of ageism” from participants in their Singaporean study (Luyt and Ho Swee, 2011, p. 209). A possible reason for this may be the different cultural context between Singapore and New Zealand. Participants who did witness older adults saying they are “slow”, were quick to point to the evidence to show that they were remembering what they have learnt. They also explained that the older adults keep “coming back” despite the comments about struggling.

Two participants who run programmes which attract Chinese older adults talked about the language barrier. Having Chinese staff members was seen as one way to reduce this. Furthermore, at least six libraries offer Book Chat groups that are conducted in Mandarin alongside other programmes and services at other libraries, such as basic computer skill sessions (Auckland Council, 2016e). According to Statistics New Zealand, at the 2013 Census, there were 171,411 people who identify as “Chinese”, with 69 percent or 118,230 of them residing in Auckland (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.c). With these numbers, there is no doubt that Auckland Libraries must continue to seize the opportunity to cater to this demographic, now and in the future.

Another key point was a comment from one participant about attitudes towards ageing and memory decline. They stated that as people get older, they get “wiser” and libraries have the opportunity to benefit from their life experience and wisdom. This ties into the Ministry of Social Development’s positive ageing principles, one of which states “recognise the diversity of older people and ageing as a normal part of the lifecycle” (Ministry of Social Development, 2013, p. 6). Additionally, Te Kauroa – Future Directions states that there are “opportunities for using the skills and
knowledge of older residents to support services and programmes” (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 11).

This one participant’s philosophy is one that could perhaps be shared with other staff as it aligns with these statements. It is important that libraries have a part to play in honouring these statements from the Ministry of Social Development and from Te Kauroa – Future Directions as the number of older adults in Auckland increases over the next several decades.

Participants were asked about whether their programme or event covers topics or activities that are of interest to a variety of older adults. Those involved with Book Chat groups all stated that a variety of genres were discussed and one manager explained that topics for guest speakers were deliberately wide-ranging. Furthermore, participants talked of different authors or speakers attracting different attendees. This is positive as it shows that a variety of authors and speakers are appealing to different groups of people. This is just as the American Library Association’s 2008 Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults states, they are planning programmes while being aware that interests vary greatly (American Library Association, 2008, p. 211). Although it is not a New Zealand document, the guidelines are cross-cultural and could be applied to a New Zealand public library context.

9.4 Gender and Cultural Differences

Most participants acknowledged that men and women attend different programmes and events to each other. It was also acknowledged that men are less likely to want to discuss books, especially if it is not something they are used to doing. No men attended craft groups and were less likely to attend the digital device outreach programme. The only programme or event attended by men only was the Chinese chess group.

This provides an opportunity for libraries to organise programmes and events that “recognise the different issues facing men and women” (Ministry of Social Development, 2013, p. 6) as stated by the Ministry of Social Development in their ten positive ageing principles. Perhaps it is appropriate to acknowledge that men and
women do, in fact, attend different programmes and events to each other. One participant picked up on the idea of having a space where men can read newspapers and magazines, chat to friends and acquaintances, and then leave, acknowledging that men have different library needs to women.

Despite this, men or women are not explicitly targeted. It appears that whether more men or women attend a programme or event depends on the nature of the programme or event. It was also picked up by two participants that women outlive men, meaning more women are around and able to attend programmes and events. According to Statistics New Zealand, this is correct as in 2013, 54.1 percent of people aged 65 or older were women and 45.9 percent were men. Furthermore, within the 65+ bracket, 64.3 percent of over 85s were women (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.b) which is something that perhaps libraries should be aware of.

There appears to be people from a range of cultures attending programmes and events. The Ministry of Social Development’s positive ageing principles includes the need to “recognise the cultural identity of older people living in New Zealand” (Ministry of Social Development, 2013, p. 6). Cultural identity and differences appear to be a point of interest at many programmes and events. Four participants explained that cultural differences were a way of initiating conversation during a programme or event. One remarked that people are “really interested” when other cultures and experiences are brought up during discussions. This is not only showing recognition of cultural diversity, but also a glimpse of celebration towards other people’s cultural identities.

9.5 Concluding Section
According to Statistics New Zealand, the “population of the Auckland region aged 65 years and over (65+) will more than double between 2006 and 2031” (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.a). When told this, five out of the eight participants were aware of Auckland’s ageing population. There were some comments about the positive impact this would have on the library. For example, at least two librarians saw it as an opportunity to “offer more” as a large number of older adults would be around. Two librarians thought about the need to offer more outreach. Te Kauroa – Future Directions acknowledges those who are unable to come to the library due to age or
disability. It states that although they might be “home or rest home bound”, they still have a “need for creative recreation that keeps the mind and spirit nourished” (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 31).

It may be the right time for libraries to think about the opportunity to offer outreach programmes to certain groups in the community. The American Library Association states that libraries should “explore opportunities to provide library services and programming to older adults outside the library, such as in senior or community centers, nursing homes, and senior housing units. Consider offering computer and Internet training in these locations” (American Library Association, 2008, p. 211). The digital device outreach programme is one example of this successfully occurring. As it has been noted throughout this study, those at the retirement village keep returning to learn more; they “don’t give up” and are “hungry to learn”. This is an example of an outreach programme that also encourages lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning was a point picked up by both managers when thinking about the implications of an ageing society for their respective libraries. Under section 5: “target the older population in library programming”, the American Library Association lists “creating opportunities for lifelong learning programmes” as one of their guidelines for public libraries (American Library Association, 2008, p. 211). Furthermore, the Ministry of Social Development (2013) states one of its positive ageing principles as “enable older people to take responsibility for their personal growth and development through changing circumstances” (Ministry of Social Development, 2013, p. 6). Both managers’ attitudes show a positive outlook for the future where lifelong learning in the library for older adults is viewed as important.

However, there were concerns about staffing and space. Two participants explained that they do not have a designated room to hold events which can limit the number of events they can hold. This often results in events being held in areas of the library that may impede other customers’ ability to use that area or indeed the library as a whole as access is affected and noise may be an issue.

Other comments in the concluding section of the interviews included the fact security and comfort may affect older adults’ decisions to come to the library. This is also
included in Sloan and Vincent (2009)’s framework. They point out that “programmes need to consider timing and venue, whether people want to go to a particular place in the evening, public transport, parking and street lighting” (Sloan and Vincent, 2009, p. 26). The American Library Association (2008) also points out the need to ensure the library’s “collections and physical facilities” are “safe, comfortable and inviting for all older adults” (American Library Association, 2008, p. 210). Again, this shows a positive attitude towards ensuring older adults feel safe and comfortable coming to the library and attending programmes and events.

10. Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

There are a number of points that have arisen from this study’s findings. These are as follows:

- Two participants commented on the fact Chinese grandparents are attending early childhood programmes in the caregiver role. Te Kauroa – Future Directions touches on the idea of grandparents and other older adults reading stories in their own language. This could be an opportunity for this to occur.

- It should be ensured that some of the programmes implemented in the future focus on lifelong learning. This is emphasised by the American Library Association (2008) and picked up on by the two managers who were interviewed.

- It is important that those who are not “regulars” at programmes and events feel welcome and invited. Libraries must be careful that a “clique”-like environment does not occur to the detriment of new attendees.

- It is important to remember that this study focused on eight staff members from five libraries which is approximately 9 percent of Auckland’s 55 libraries. Although the results of this study cannot be generalised, they can still be used to assist librarians when implementing programmes and events are designed to attract older adults.
Future research could look at older adults who are irregular or non-library users in Auckland. This study looks at how programmes and events are meeting the needs of older adults who are already library users. Further research could look at what could encourage them to use the library or what is currently discouraging them.

Future research could look at Auckland Libraries’ outreach programmes and how they are meeting the needs of older adults. This could involve older adults who are housebound or who live in rest homes, especially as Statistics New Zealand points out that an ageing population will result in more rest homes and retirement villages (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.a).

Future research could look at the factors that influence why men do not attend as many Auckland Libraries programmes and events as women, or why they attend different programmes and events to women. This could be for older adults or adults in general.

11. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to find out how Auckland’s public libraries are meeting the needs of older adults through the programmes and events that they offer. The study began with three research questions (RQ) which can now be answered.

RQ1. What are older adults’ needs in the context of programmes and events at public libraries?

Throughout the literature review, many issues for older adults were discovered. A summary of what older adults’ needs are is presented in the final section of the literature review (section 5). Each participant was presented with a summary of these points in preparation for their interview. These are as follows:

1. There is a need for interaction, community, and participation as there is the risk of social isolation
2. There is a need for personal interests to be recognised and personal growth to be valued

3. There is a need for gender and cultural differences to be recognised

**RQ2. Are any of the programmes and events offered by Auckland Libraries specifically targeted to older adults? Why or why not?**

Section 8A examines the fact Auckland Libraries generally does not target older adults for its programmes and events. Out of the eight participants, two were involved in two programmes that deliberately targets older adults. The reasoning behind this was the need for the library to have more of a “presence” at a local retirement village and offering a digital device outreach programme achieved this. Providing a seniors’ computer class grew out of offering individual Book a Librarian sessions to older adults who were keen to be part of the “digital world”.

Those who do not deliberately target adults explained that it was not necessary because older adults come to their programmes and events anyway. If the timing and the nature of the programme or event suits them, they will attend. It appears that this is supported by the fact a variety of genres are discussed at Book Chat groups, a range of topics are discussed as guest speaker talks, a range of author talks are promoted, and a variety of programmes and events in general are offered. All of these have resulted in a variety of older adults, including those from other cultures attending programmes and events.

At this point, it is important to state that while participants are not necessarily “deliberately” targeting older adults, many programmes and events are attractive to older adults due to the nature of the programme or event. Whilst this is not explicitly targeting older adults, participants are perhaps inadvertently targeting older adults because of the type of event for example a craft group, that they offer.

**RQ3. How are the programmes and events meeting the needs of older adults?**
1. There is a need for interaction, community, and participation as there is the risk of social isolation.

All participants who run programmes and events stated they had witnessed interaction between older adults. There was some “mingling” between older adults and younger adults, interaction between older adults and staff, and older adults attending children’s programmes in a caregiving capacity.

Belonging to a community is more difficult to measure. One library has a community garden which is run by volunteers. The participant involved in this initiative explained that one volunteer who is a Chinese older adult uses this as an opportunity to communicate with New Zealanders and find out what herbs they want to take home. This could be viewed as feeling part of, and giving back to, the community. Alternatively, the fact that many older adults are attending programmes and events at their local library shows that they feel a sense of belonging to their community. This could be especially so for those who are “regulars” at certain programmes and events.

Most of the programmes and events discussed by the participants involve some form of participation. This may be through simply attending a programme or event such as an author talk and feeling “involved”. It may be through a more active form of participation such as being part of discussions or working on a project at a craft group.

All of the programmes and events involve other people. The variety of programmes and events offered means a wide variety of older adults are attending. Because of this, perhaps the risk of social isolation is minimised as something will appeal to them enough to attend. Even though the volunteer gardeners may not necessarily be tending to the garden at the same time, they will be participating and may feel a sense of belonging to the local community.

2. There is a need for personal interests to be recognised and personal growth to be valued

As mentioned in the discussion for RQ2, a wide variety of genres are discussed at
Book Chat groups, a range of topics are discussed at guest speaker talks, a range of author talks are promoted, and a variety of programmes and events in general are offered. Although public libraries cannot possibly offer programmes and events that will appeal to every older adults’ personal interests, there is a wide range that will appeal to many. The fact that there is such a wide range, not only in the programmes and events discussed during the interviews, but also others that are offered and advertised through Auckland Libraries’ website, shows that Auckland Libraries is recognising that there are a range of interests to cater for.

Personal growth is valued in certain programmes and events. For example, during the digital device outreach programme, librarians encourage older adults to practise things despite comments about being “slow”. They show the older adults that they are learning and that they are remembering what they have previously learnt, and they keep returning to the sessions. Personal growth is something that can be encouraged in the future at Auckland Libraries through programmes that support lifelong learning such as digital device sessions. Both managers saw the opportunity for the library to have a role in this.

3. There is a need for gender and cultural differences to be recognised
Participants acknowledged that men and women attend different programmes and events to each other. One issue was the difficulty in getting more men to attend programmes and events. More research is needed in this area. However, in the meantime, it is recommended that it is accepted that men and women will attend different programmes and events and therefore libraries need to offer programmes and events that will attract men and programmes and events that will attract women.

A mixture of cultures at programmes and events was apparent for all participants. Where appropriate, cultural differences are acknowledged and attendees chat to others about their experiences in other countries.

Despite language barriers, Chinese customers may feel more comfortable coming to the library if there is a Chinese staff member to assist them and if there are ways for them to feel part of the community. As it states in Te Kauroa – Future Directions, there is the option of “grandparents or other older people reading stories in their own
language” (Auckland Libraries, 2013, p. 42). This is something for Auckland Libraries to consider for communities with a high number of people whose first language is not English.
12. References


Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

**Research Project Title:** Programmes and Events for Older Adults in Auckland’s Public Libraries

**Researcher:** Hannah Stiff, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Master of Information Studies, this study is designed to investigate whether Auckland’s public libraries are meeting the library needs of older adults (the elderly) through their programmes and events. Older adults’ needs have been ascertained through examining numerous studies, reports, statistics, and guidelines. Library staff will be interviewed to find out how the libraries are meeting these needs through the programmes and events they offer. Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School’s Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting staff who work for Auckland Libraries to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in a thirty-minute interview. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants for checking.

Participation is voluntary, and you or the library you work for will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor, Anne Goulding (Professor of Library and Information Management). The research report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the project, they may do so until four weeks after the interview and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within two years after the completion of the project. Participants are emailed the summary of the research results once the research report has been submitted and returned to myself if they have expressed this wish and have provided an email address.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at stiffhann@myvw.ac.nz or telephone 0211627941, or you may contact my supervisor Anne Goulding (Professor of Library and Information Management) at anne.goulding@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04 4635887.

Hannah Stiff
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

**Research Project Title:** Programmes and Events for Older Adults in Auckland’s Public Libraries

**Researcher:** Hannah Stiff, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing stiffhann@myvuw.ac.nz until four weeks after the interview.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and their supervisor, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me or the library I work for.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others.

I understand that, if this interview is audio recorded, the recording and transcripts of the interviews will be erased within 2 years after the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

- [ ] I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.
- [ ] I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:

Email address:
Appendix C: Interview Sheet for Librarians

Questions for participants who run or organise programmes/events

- It is acknowledged that it is not always possible to know a customer’s age and so your observations will be based on guesses that a customer is an older adult (65+)
- It is acknowledged that there are no right or wrong answers. Answers are purely your observations and opinions

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Summary of what older adults’ needs are
1. There is a need for interaction, community, and participation as there is the risk of social isolation
2. There is a need for personal interests to be recognised and personal growth to be valued
3. There is a need for gender and cultural differences to be recognised

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Points from the research that are referred to:

Q9. Point about internalised attitude towards ageing:
“There is an internalised attitude towards ageing that sees some older people believe they have difficulties retaining information they have learnt at a library programme or event”

Q10. Point about pursuing leisure activities
“Older adults continue to pursue their leisure activities from their earlier years into their older years. Older adults are more likely to engage in leisure activities if they live with a spouse or partner”

Q14. Point about Auckland’s population ageing
“The population of the Auckland region aged 65 and over” will “more than double between 2006 and 2031” according to Statistics New Zealand.
A. General questions about targeting and numbers etc:

Q1: “Tell me about the programmes/events you’re involved in”

Q2A: “Do the programmes/events you’re involved in deliberately target older adults? (For example, the name of the programme includes the word “seniors”, or the event is for an activity traditionally associated with older people, such as knitting). Why do you think this is?”

Q2B: “If yes – why and how? Has it always been this way? Why/why not? What has changed?”

Q3: “Do your programmes/events attract older adults? Why do you think this is?”

B. Questions about interaction, community, and participation:

Q4A: “Are there opportunities for those attending your programme/event to interact with each other?”

Q4B: “If yes - how has this come about? If no, is this something that could be suitable for your programme/event?”

Q5A: “Have you observed interaction and discussion between people attending your programme/event? In particular, older adults interacting with others?”

Q5B: “If yes - to what extent do older adults interact with those who are younger?” (Is there much “mingling” between the generations?)

Q6: “Do staff interact with customers attending the programme/event? Can you tell me a bit more about what you have observed?”

Q7: “Have you noticed whether there are “regulars” at your programme/event? Why do you think this is?”

Q8: “Have you noticed whether friendships have formed at your programme/event? Can you tell me a bit more about what you’ve observed?” (You don’t have to know if they are actually “friends”, but more like if you have noticed people catching up
before the event actually begins, or whether certain people sit next to each other and chat during your programme/event)

C. Questions about personal interests/growth:

Q9: Refer to point about internalised attitude towards ageing: “Do you believe this is true based on your experiences running your programme/event? Can you tell me more about this?” (For example, have there been comments from older adults about forgetting things, or that things “just don’t sink in”?)

Q10: Refer to points about pursuing leisure activities: “Do you think your programme/event covers topics or activities that are of interest to a variety of older adults?” (For example, book chat groups talking about a variety of genres, including non-fiction, or a variety of guest speakers to appeal to a range of people).

D. Questions about gender and cultural differences:

Q11: “Have you observed whether older men and older women attend different programmes/events to each other? Have you noticed whether there are more men or women at your programme/event? Why do you think this might this be?” Are men or women targeted for your programme/event?

Q12: “Have you noticed whether people from different cultures attend the programme/event you offer? Why do you think this is?”

Q13: “When there is a cultural mix at a programme/event, are cultural differences acknowledged during discussions where appropriate?” (An example of this could be a talk about funeral planning where the Maori tangihanga is discussed as well as a New Zealand European funeral).

E. Any other comments

Q14: Refer to information that states that the population of the Auckland region aged 65 and over will more than double between 2006 and 2031. “Are you aware of the fact Auckland’s population is ageing? How do you think this will impact your library in the future, in particular, when organising programmes and events?”

Q15: “After hearing about older adults’ needs and their issues, and thinking about our interview, is there anything else you want to comment on? Is there anything may
consider changing for the programme/event you’re involved in? Has this interview helped reaffirm anything for you?”
Appendix D: Interview Sheet for Managers

Questions for Managers

- It is acknowledged that it is not always possible to know a customer’s age and so your observations will be based on guesses that a customer is an older adult (65+)

- It is acknowledged that there are no right or wrong answers. Answers are purely your observations and opinions

Summary of what older adults’ needs are:
1. There is a need for interaction, community, and participation as there is the risk of social isolation

2. There is a need for personal interests to be recognised and personal growth to be valued

3. There is a need for gender and cultural differences to be recognised

Points from the research that are referred to:

Q4. Point about Auckland’s population ageing

“The population of the Auckland region aged 65 and over” will “more than double between 2006 and 2031” according to Statistics New Zealand.

Q8. Point about pursuing leisure activities

“Older adults continue to pursue their leisure activities from their earlier years into their older years. Older adults are more likely to engage in leisure activities if they live with a spouse or partner”
A. General questions about targeting and numbers etc:

Q1: “Tell me about the programmes/events your library offers or that you’re involved in”

Q2A: “Does your library have a policy or strategy in relation to programmes and events for adults?”

Q2B: “If yes – can you tell me about this? Does this include older adults? If no – why is this?”

Q3A: “Are you familiar with Auckland Libraries’ Future Directions document?”

Q3B: “If yes – are you aware of the focus on children? Are you aware that there isn’t a section that specifically targets older adults? What is your response to this, especially when thinking about your library’s programmes and events?”

Q4: “Are you aware of the fact Auckland’s population is ageing? How do you think this will impact your library, in particular, when organising programmes and events?” (Refer to information that states that the population of the Auckland region aged 65 and over will more than double between 2006 and 2031)

Q5A: “Do the programmes/events at your library deliberately target older adults? (For example, the name of the programme includes the word “seniors”, or the event is for an activity traditionally associated with older people, such as knitting). Why do you think this is?”

Q5B: “If yes – why and how? Has it always been this way? Why/why not? What has changed?”

Q6: “Do your programmes/events attract older adults? Why do you think this is?”

B. Questions about interaction, community, and participation:

Q7: “Do staff interact with customers attending the programme/event? Can you tell me a bit more about what you have observed?”

“Is this something that you have had input in? Can you tell me a bit about this?”
C. Questions about personal interests/growth:

Q8: Refer to points about pursuing leisure activities: “Do you think your programme/event covers topics or activities that are of interest to a variety of older adults?” (For example, book chat groups talking about a variety of genres, including non-fiction, or a variety of guest speakers to appeal to a range of people).

D. Questions about gender and cultural differences:

Q9: “Do you think your programmes/events targets men rather than women, or vice versa, either directly or inadvertently? Why do you think this is?”

Q10: “Have you noticed whether people from different cultures attend the programmes/events you offer? Why do you think this is?”

E. Any other comments

Q11: “After reading about older adults’ needs and their issues, and thinking about our interview, is there anything you may consider changing for the programmes/events you’re involved in? Are there things that have been reaffirmed for you that you consider to be doing well?”