Overcoming Digital Divides Workshop Series: Older Adults and...

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SPEAKERS

Sam Andrey, Caroline Grammer, Eric Craven, Karen Wong, Michel Mersereau, Ginny Bosomworth

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S   **Sam Andrey**   01:36

Welcome everyone, we're thrilled to have you, we're just going to give people, one minute to file in before we start. Thanks for being here. All right, welcome everyone to the third part of our Overcoming Digital Divides series. It's a six part workshop series presented as a partnership with the Ryerson Leadership Lab, the Brookfield Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the First nations Technology Council, and Simon Fraser University's Public Square, and supported by our title sponsor TELUS. I'm Sam Andrey, the Director of Policy and Research at the Ryerson Leadership Lab and we're thrilled that you're able to join us today. Before we begin I want to take a moment to recognize those not able to gather with us here today, frontline workers, caregivers, people on low incomes and otherwise unable to get into this conversation and really, who this conversation is intended to serve, those who are disconnected from quality, safe, and reliable digital services. To try to do our part to to address that gap in access, we will be making this recording available along with a transcript and a summary of the major takeaways after today's discussion. I just want to point out accessibility features for our virtual conversation today. There is a live transcript that you can follow along with, if you click on

the top left corner on that red box that says live, you'll be taken to a separate screen that has the transcript that you can follow along with. If you are prompted to make an account, which happens to some people, just click the X, and you don't have to do that. Before we begin, I'd also like to give a land acknowledgement, that's reflective of where Ryerson University sits. We do this as a symbolic restorative act, one among many to follow and part of a wider hopefully transformative reconciliation project here at Ryerson. Toronto is on the territory of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat. It is covered by the Dish with One Spoon treaty, Treaty #13, and the Williams Treaties. We're committed to honoring our obligations to these nations treaties, and to justice for Indigenous people more generally. And through this workshop series we hope to do that by amplifying Indigenous voices and ensuring that we're making space to consider the unique realities and digital divides faced by Indigenous people in Canada. We're excited to be continuing our digital divide series today with a discussion focused on the digital divides faced by older adults, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the move toward online delivery of critical services and social interactions, access to the internet at sufficient speed and quality is more important than ever. And you know, public libraries across Canada are seeing increased use of digital services by older adults during the pandemic and many organizations, some of whom we have today on the panel are providing amazing digital literacy programs that teach older adults things like zoom navigation to get into conversations like this. And so we hope to share that progress and also what challenges remain to connect older adults to all digital services now and coming out of the pandemic. So I'm pleased now to pass the mic to our moderator Ginny Bosworth, our moderator for today. Ginny has held senior leadership positions in the US financial services industry before launching her own consulting practice here in Canada and Ginny served as the President of the LIFE Institute, a Toronto based charity dedicated to providing lifelong learning opportunities to older adults through courses activities and volunteer opportunities. Thanks so much for being here, Ginny.

Ginny Bosomworth   06:04
Thank you, Sam. Hello everybody, it's a delight to be here with you today. I'm excited about this opportunity to continue this series, with a discussion about Internet access and adoption for older adults, and we hope to shed light on accessibility, affordability, and internet adoption challenges faced by older adults as well as accelerate some public discourse on effective policy solutions. Our workshop today will include introductory remarks from each panelist and discussion, directed by two guiding questions that I will pose. We welcome your questions anytime throughout the session by using the chat function. And now to our incredible speakers who we're honored and excited to have them with us today. I will go through and introduce each of them and following my introduction for all four will allow each of them to provide a few remarks that helps to highlight their

passion and their participation today. Eric Craven, is the Community Development Librarian and Digital Literacy Project Coordinator at Atwater Library and Computer Centre in Montreal, Quebec. For the past 10 years, Eric has created community based programming and spaces for participants to express themselves and represent their communities through digital media projects. Eric has worked with a wide range of academic and community stakeholders, of all ages, including organizing immersive, digital media projects to engage seniors. Eric, you want to wave and then we'll come back to you. Thank you. Karen Wong is a researcher at the Science and Technology for Aging Research Institute at Simon Fraser University. She's also a Clinical Advisor at the 411 Seniors Center, a community hub focused on the well being of those aged 55 and older in Vancouver. Karen has conducted research and analyzed policies on older adults and health care in Canada, including publishing and presenting her work in various academic and professional settings. Karen, it's your turn to wave. Caroline Grammer is a Professor at Seneca College's Department of Community Services and Social Worker Gerontology Diploma Program. Caroline has been a gerotechnology consultant for the past 25 years working with global think tanks on how technology can allow for aging in place. Caroline has also worked as a social worker assessing vulnerable and at-risk populations, including older adults in palliative and long term care settings, and is practicing as a Psychotherapist for over 20 years. Michel Mersereau is a postdoctoral fellow at the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. Michel received his PhD in 2020 and his research focuses on the role of the internet in facilitating access to essential services, needs and goods, as well as the broader policy implications associated with digital inequity. Thank you all for joining us today. Michel, delighted to have you and happy to see you. We're also hoping to collect the input of our participants today in our audience by using Jamboards which you can access by the link in the chat. To add a comment, use a sticky note tab on the left hand side of your screen. And one of our team members will be back on the backend helping to organize these responses as they come in, it's fairly easy to use. You'll find it accessible, and we hope you'll participate. As we get started, I wanted to provide some introductory context to our discussion today. As of 2017, 74% of those aged 65 and older have some home internet service, compared to 92% of those 50 to 64 and over 97% of those under 50. So 65 and older have 74% of that population has access, compared to 97% of those 50 and under. Lower adoption rates for older adults are also accompanied by lower speed, 48% of people over 60 are using a download speed that is slower than the CRTC's megabytes per second target, so 48%. That compares to 38% of the overall population. Older people in Canada are also more likely to lack a device to connect to the internet. People over 60, 20% of that population does not own smartphone, compared to only 5% of those under 60.

G   Ginny Bosomworth   10:54

When we ask older people in Canada, what they would say about the digital technologies, they have some interesting feedback for us. They tell us that the digital technologies do not help them communicate with others, and they're not necessarily helping them make more informed decisions or save time. A quarter of the Canadians who are searching for digital literacy programs, cited online security as a primary topic of interest, followed by Internet navigation skills, and evaluating credible online sources as their needed priorities. I will open the floor for the panelists to provide brief introductory remarks of their work, and overall take on the digital divide for older adults. And Eric, why don't we start with you.

E **Eric Craven** 11:46
Thank you. I'm very happy to be here. I'm, I guess, the context from which I'm working as the Atwater Library is one of the oldest lending libraries in Canada started in 1828, it is also an independent library so it's not part of the network of municipalities in the area. So, in many ways we function more like a not for profit, charity. So a lot of my work comes through projects funding, which is an interesting thing, sometimes I'm envious of institutions that have kind of a more consistent funding structure, but it means that we always have to be really in touch with our community and make really strong partnerships so I work a lot in partnership with other community organizations. I work a lot with with seniors. And in the last 10 years, it's really evolved to be something where the digital literacy project engages seniors in projects that they themselves are interested in, and so we asked the question why would seniors want to be involved in this, and then answer that through participant-led projects and that could be putting together a big, a creative media project for for an event at the library. It could be all kinds of things and so we were working with that. And so, that's the way we could kind of get folks involved in the digital literacy project. And so we see all kinds of a wide range and that's I guess one of the things from where I'm sitting, is that older adults are just such a diverse population with all sorts of different types of situations so I tried to create a composite space where if you have a 10 year old phone, or if you have the latest and greatest, we kind of are engaging in conversation and doing something that we were interested in doing. And then the digital skills follow, and people are surprised what they learn.

G **Ginny Bosomworth** 13:51
That's great. Thank you, Eric. Karen.

K **Karen Wong** 13:56
So I have been doing a project with SFU, and also 411, Senior Center here in BC. That

project is about trying to understand the information and referral services in the province. So what do we find very interestingly is that many of the information and resources, and also support services have moved online, even before the COVID pandemic because of many different reasons. But of course since the COVID, the speed of moving to online is even quicker. So, we found that for many service providers, and also volunteers who themselves, many of them are seniors, we found that many seniors have challenges, accessing this information, resources and also support services. And we found that access to technology, includes many different elements. So, internet and equipment, of course, a very important part, but other than that, I think, like Eric has just mentioned about the digital literacy. The knowledge of using the technology, and also the comfort, how comfortable using the technology is also very important. So, we found three different perspectives, based on what we've found the first perspective is a human rights perspective, because so many information and resources and support services are now delivered online. Indeed, are very important to the day to day living of many seniors. So, we can consider access to technology as a need. So when we consider a this as a need we can interpreted it as a right. So, using this perspective, it had huge implications on the advocacy work we are doing already in different sectors, including the community senior services. So, this is the first perspective, the human rights perspective, another perspective we found is the intersection perspective, which means that indeed for seniors to have successful access to technology, it relied on the collaboration of different sectors, however, different sectors are not necessarily able to communicate with each other, they would like to, and work very hard to sometimes because of the difference in terms of the use of technical language experience perspective, sometimes it's difficult for them to understand what each other is doing. So I think there's a particular, a big gap between academic and also our frontline workers working with older adults. So, how we can facilitate that intersectional collaboration. It's something we need to explore. And the third perspective.

G Ginny Bosomworth   17:37

Carolyn I'm gonna ask you to fill in some of those comments as we get into the broader discussion, maybe I think you're right on, on track in terms of answering some of the questions that we're gonna pose. So if you'll allow me then to just go ahead and move to Caroline.

C Caroline Grammer   18:02

I was just gonna let Karen continue to talk because my research is echoing hers. Which is good to see. I mean it seems to be consistent across, you know what, Eastern, Western, Central Canada is experiencing. So our research, I'm part of a group, partnerships with the

City of Toronto, and Sam is part of that partnership. Our responsibility in the partnership is to look at seniors and how they experienced since the lockdown of COVID, the level of digital access and isolation. So we asked one question, what's your experience been like since the COVID lockdown in isolation in terms of digital access. What we've found is that, and I'm going to echo Karen, with a number of these pieces. One of the things that we found was that there were several issues involved, access to high speed internet of courses is one, but it didn't stop there. For seniors, there are multiple areas of access, access means something different. Devices were important, and we found out that tablets are the preferred not phones. We found that seniors have difficulty reading and seeing the phones and utilizing them to their optimum ability when they're smartphones, as well as physically typing in them and the touchscreen was too small. So, tablets seem to be across the board the preferred device. The setup, and of the modem in the setup of even delivering the tools the devices in the modem to senior who's is in isolation, was an enormous barrier. The other barrier was they weren't even aware of things like the Toronto Library hotspot program, Even though I know the Toronto Library and I think that Karen you speak to that silo effect that many parts, many agencies are working very hard, but they're working in silos and I know that Toronto Public Library has tried to communicate that to several senior supportive agencies across Toronto but somehow it didn't make its way to the actual seniors, every senior and every family member and even healthcare workers that we interviewed had no idea about the free Toronto Wi Fi hotspot program and devices.

Caroline Grammer   20:39

The next piece that we found difficult was seniors are have a number of intersectionalities to deal with, there's a language issue, one of the things that came up was we were able to deliver this research in several different languages. And what we were finding out is even if they can navigate the website even if they have a device, the websites are in English and French, and they're not translated into the natural languages of these individuals. And when you're dealing with navigating healthcare issues or financial services, you really need to have a fluency in English or French in order to understand what's being literally said on the internet. So many of these websites don't have the language accessibility for our seniors so again that became another barrier. Another issue was assistance, many of our seniors have functional disabilities, sensory disabilities, and cognitive impairments. So assistance just didn't mean over the phone trying to teach them how to get connected, once we got the high speed internet once we finally got the device, and we're talking to them on the phone on how to turn on all this stuff, they didn't have the functional abilities because of various factors like arthritis. They had cognitive impairments and had difficulty visual impairments and auditory impairments. And so what we were finding was that our frontline health care workers, particularly the personal support workers, often had to be

there to operate the device, even in a long term care setting and in a retirement home setting so another barrier became that especially in long term care where they are being isolated in their rooms when they're on lockdown in this quiet like solitary confinement, there's, I mean there's no better word for it, and they have no access to the outside and the only way that they can communicate is through these tablets and the only way they could do that is with a healthcare worker being there because families aren't allowed, and this became another problem for health care workers because they have, they're overloaded with what they have to do already, but essential to these older adults who are feeling very lonely. We've gotten reports back from our frontline that what we're hearing is that they're feeling safer about COVID because of the vaccine, but they're still very lonely and quite depressed, we've had comments that I found quite telling. And, you know, with a sense of humor, they've said I think I'm going to take up smoking, it's the only way I can get out. So smokers were allowed out, but if you didn't smoke you weren't allowed out of your room and you weren't allowed out at the building, others who were saying I'm so lonely I want to die. And so, that internet access, even though it's not human contact is still virtual human contact and so essential. So that really quickly some of the things echoed the human rights but it also falls under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, let's dial it right back down to Canada and the federal and provincial requirements here in terms of rights to access because so many services and everything's been put online. And Eric, you're correct. They loved the libraries, they went to the seniors community centers and the most popular programs were exercise and computers, computer, computer training, but with all the services shut down, they don't have that anymore.

G Ginny Bosomworth   24:10

And Caroline you are moving right into the first question to not only identifying, so we're getting to address some of the solutions is important for us to hear but as we get into that in greater detail. Let me go to Michel, why don't you give us a little bit of your interest in what brings you to the digital divide.

M Michel Mersereau   24:29

Hello everybody, thank you for the time. So I'm going to knowledge I came to this particular issue with with older adults, indirectly through my research. My research has always been focused on the digital divide, but my interest has been really trying to look at access to the internet. From an infrastructural perspective. So really, my interest, conducting research, most recently at the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, where I engaged with a sizable cohort of older adults living independently at the TCHC, which is why I'm here. And prior to that, looking at internet as infrastructure at Toronto's Native Men's Residence, but the point being that my approach to this topic and area of

scholarship is really to help resolve a lot of the blind spots that are in the literature around the digital divide. And when I say blind spots what I mean is looking at having access to the Internet in terms of its role in facilitating routine normalized day to day activity as an essential piece of technology. I situate it as a piece of technology that is in fact de facto compulsory, meaning that absent this technology it is exceedingly difficult for people to go about doing the most mundane and routine things that we all need to do, just to survive. So, I'm really interested in it, from that infrastructural lens. And in that way I tend to look at how individual and household activities as a whole are interconnected, and supported through internet based technology so using that, from that perspective is how I kind of attack the issue of the digital divide. So when I say I came at it indirectly. One of my participant cohorts at the Toronto Community Housing Corporation was older adults living independently, and the data I collected was really amazing. And that kind of challenges some of the data that's out there. The census data, anyway, that is out there regarding older adult use of the Internet, constructive use in their day to day routines and activities. And I think this really speaks to the importance of evidence-based qualitative research to help resolve these blind spots. Now, obviously, the older adult populations that I engaged with were active independently living internet users in their households, but all my data was collected pre pandemic. And what's really interesting about it is the extent to which my participants were able to describe how they have organized and rearranged and made more efficient, their own personal domestic routines in and around having household internet access, that was key for me, but also very importantly, how they came about these skills, 15 of my 16 participants from the TCHC facility that I engaged with the older adult facility that I worked at, 15 of the 16 participants adopted Internet services at home during their time as residents in that facility. So what they were able to provide me from an infrastructural perspective is really clear accounts of how their routines have changed over the course of their adopting those routines. So what I'm very interested in is looking at comparing those changed states and looking at the differences in the amount of labor expended on certain activities, financial implications, things like that. And there were some very strong connections to the earlier research I had conducted at the native men's residence with regard to how literacy and digital skills were come by and were diffused within that community, the importance, as I've subsequently delved into gerotechnology research. Thank you Caroline for providing me with those resources. I've been diving into gerotechnology research, and the connections between the data that I was able to collect are very apparent.

M Michel Mersereau 29:23

The importance of social network and social tie strength emerged as a key indicator, both from the residents at the native ms men's residents and the TCHC facility in terms of motivating and contributing to their digital skills and their rationale and motivations for

adopting technology so long story short, I've come at this indirectly. I believe I have some valuable contributions and some valuable insight on this particular issue. But on the positive side with the TCHC anyways, largely as a result of the data collected from the older adult population that I worked with at the TCHC back in November of 2020. They did approve a motion to investigate the deployment of universal and non excludable household broadband services in all rent geared to income tenancy units across their portfolio. And the last I spoke with people at the TCHC, their intention ostensibly is to begin with older adult households in rolling out this program.

Ginny Bosomworth 30:40

Another solution. So thank you Michel I really appreciate your remarks. As each of you introduced yourselves to our audience it's obviously a group of people who have great depth and broad interests and a lot of passion for the topic, we welcome you to our panel into the conversation we'll have today, we're going to spend the next 15 minutes or so, sort of developing what you've already introduced, and that is responding to the first question that I will pose for you. As I do that I will also acknowledge that the chat room is busy, people are offering suggestions to one another in terms of access and ways to connect and experiences that they've had and I think that our Jamboard is also accumulating content as well so thank you for that and we would encourage you to continue to do so. So our first question. And again we just have about 15 minutes so I'd ask each of our panelists to contemplate how they would like to share their remarks within that time frame. Our first question is what barriers do older adults face with online access, many of you have mentioned those as in your opening remarks, and what barriers do they face in acquiring or building digital literacy and how can they be addressed. And to sort of put a little twist on this I would ask you to contemplate the difference between a 60 year old versus an 85 year old. Why don't we start with you, Karen.

Karen Wong 32:07

Yeah, for sure. I think like there are many different challenges and possible solutions, but when I tried to have an overview of different challenges, I learned, I think one of the very key idea, which leads to this different challenges is actually poverty, and because of the financial situation of many seniors, they may not be low income if you just look into the data on their average annual income. Because of the subsidize of the OAS and GIS, and income supplements, but many of them when you consider the need to spend on different things. For example, medical equipment, medication, or housing, when you consider many many different factors, indeed, and many of them couldn't afford the very equipment they need, and also the internet they need for technology access, and some of the seniors couldn't even have access to a phone, something as simple as a phone. And I think

another very big root cause is ageism, I think, like in the society there's not many devices which are particularly tailored for the needs of seniors as Caroline also mentioned. And I think the third, the last one to me, which is a huge barrier is that many of the surfaces which are supporting seniors to access to technology in detail are very underfunded and many of the communities Senior Center, they're trying to do their best to try to see how they can fill the gaps however many of them are overworked, like Caroline has also mentioned, and they want to further develop program to support older adults to assess a technology, but all the funding is very project based or they're very divided and there's no coherence on that. So I think to me these are the three main challenges.

G Ginny Bosomworth 34:48

Who else would like to jump in and add to that, we're gonna build on that. Yeah, go ahead.

E Eric Craven 34:53

I would echo everything, Karen is saying too and I think that even in the best case scenario, though, if somebody has access, then maybe they have a device. There's a lot of fear and anxiety around those devices and I think that there's different learning styles. I appreciate your comment about a difference between somebody who's 65 and 70 to 85, because there's going to be different challenges. And I don't mean challenges in like teaching somebody how to do but just challenges and how you present this as something they can engage in, and I appreciate that you brought up the word ageism too because I feel like the whole world of technology is kind of presented in a way that it's for this not for them in some ways, or if it is for them it's only to access health services, it can't be anything about their identity or their interests, or something else to well, health services are really important. It's, I think, when you're working with older adults. They don't want to feel like they're just a health issue coming there to have solutions presented to them digitally, you know, and so I think that there's a lot of issues around fear and anxiety and I think I'll be more specific, like there's a fear that I'm going to break this device, or I'm going to do something, or that, you know, literacies are always a continuum too but there's also a kind of an assumption like well, I have to know everything about this device and then and not realizing that my age, ages younger than me, we all know this a piece of the pie we may have never even looked at that menu on this device and that's okay, and that there's a lot of ways that we can sort of unpack those things. So I think that those are some of the you know the barriers that does come, even in the best case scenarios there's barriers just with trying to engage with these devices and how it connects to them and answering that again like I said before, like why should they be using it, you know, we got to ask that too.

G Ginny Bosomworth 36:50

Your comment, a nice back button on any device that takes you to the prior screen and then you can maybe start something as simple as that, but go ahead. Yeah, I think that Caroline you want to add to this.

C Caroline Grammer 37:05

This is sort of partial solution and what our team has discovered, we've offered as compensation for any of our seniors who shared their stories, the compensation was six one-to-one training sessions, and included in those sessions was the language of technology we made sure that that was one of this sessions and safety on the internet was another one 100% of our participants wanted the compensation so they wanted the training so the myth that older adults don't want to learn, and aren't interested is absolutely a myth. And if you ever remember pre COVID and you were ever in an Apple Genius store during the middle of the day it was packed with older adults. So, I don't know where that comes from, but in terms of younger and older adults when they're in their 60s they've already been introduced to that technology probably in their work, if they've been introduced to it at all. So right away, they come, they're entering it at a different era of the computer. They've also been at the birthing of it so they've actually probably got some of the better skills in terms of understanding where technology came from and where it's at now. The older older adults are coming at it for the first time, and often they don't, they know what's available, they know there's this thing called Zoom they know that there's this thing called Facebook, but having them navigate toward it, set it up, so we also set up an email address for them and explain all these different social media pieces, they're less likely to work with the banking, at first, and finances. We find older adults and of this generation much older are very guarded about their financial their, and they don't want to disclose them, and many of the programs offering low income or load or discounted devices or free internet are requiring them to disclose this information and they don't want to. So that's another barrier that we found. But it took us a long time to even. I know that the there are opportunities out there for some free devices or discounts and internet, but whenever my team looked into them and we, it was exhausting we went through an exhaustive search, none of them were targeted towards older adults, or else they'd exhausted the the other age groups and so they didn't have the reserves left for older adults. Whereas I, that's the ages in peace I think older adults should have been the first in Toronto, the TDSB is in the Catholic Toronto District School Boards are all looking after this school aged kids. You know, why are we giving them from other sources when they're already being looked after. And the last, even though they were the first that we were aware of, hey, technology is so important look at what's happening in long term care. People are dying in the in the community and in long term care and they can't even connect with their loved ones, it wasn't their first priority, and that was very, very

frustrating. So, just finding the devices was a huge barrier to training. And then of course, bringing the device to them was another barrier who's going to deliver the device, and that's why I have to thank the community agencies, even though they're inundated with other work and redeployed and triaging, they were willing to take time out of their day just to deliver the device because of how important it was to get that training. I think one of the solutions, I'd like to offer is I think that if the colleges and universities that have field placements in this area, and the high schools that have cap hours that they need to complete, and the intergenerational programming, I think that would be one really solid base where partnered agencies can better support seniors in the community and in long term care and retirement homes. Have specific job descriptions for these field placements and volunteer hours to train seniors and then have training themselves on how to train seniors or older adults. And then you've got a huge base of trainers, I mean there's nobody better than a younger person,

G Ginny Bosomworth   41:28
Tt's a win win on multiple fronts. Absolutely,

C Caroline Grammer   41:30
and it's free.

G Ginny Bosomworth   41:31
Yeah, exactly, it's just a win, across the board. Great, yeah. You know Michel there's a question that's specifically out here for you. So I will ask it of you and you can incorporate it or just answer it directly if you'd like. The question is do older adults face any sort of heuristical roadblocks when it comes to participating in digital literacy sessions at libraries.

M Michel Mersereau   41:55
That is an interesting question, and it speaks to part one of my primary observations, or a lot of the data I collected regarding how these older adult households that I worked with came by their use of the Internet. Very few of the households actually described taking up any formal training, support, whether through the library or through the computer assisted labs that were provided through the Loyola Rupay Center at the facility in question, they overwhelmingly you describe the support of their close social ties, neighbors, friends and families and things like that. Not just in helping them develop the internet, the skills that they do have in debt exhibit, and I want to make one very important point when we're

talking about digital skills and literacy itself. I think it's important to not overlook the fact that there are examples in these households of older adults, demonstrating competent and literate use of the internet, on their own terms, to support their individual needs as they see fit. So, I think it's important not to overlook that I'm not suggesting anybody is overlooking at. But from my area of scholarship there is a tendency to overlook how challenging it can be for this particular generation just to get these technologies into their lives to support with mundane activities. So, I guess, getting back to that point. I can speak directly to the TPL I can tell you that my that my participants overwhelmingly described, observing how their friends, neighbors and family members have incorporated or had incorporated Internet technologies into their activities and seen on some level of benefit there to adopting the technology themselves so I think that the support and the diffusion of skills through a local close social network is incredibly important and should not be overlooked if there's any way that can be supported. I know that within that particular building, that there are residents who were, who have a lot of experience with computer technologies from their past professional careers, and share that amongst the community just as there are residents in that facility, who helped other tenants do their tax returns and things like that because they were an accountant in their prior lives so I mean that's an important connection for me and that connects to what I saw at the native men's residence as well. In terms of barriers I think one thing that we should not overlook as well, is this idea of a digital enclosure. So we're talking a lot about individual motivation for adopting Internet services and and how individuals, incorporate that into their day to day lives. I saw a lot of concerns and motivation in and around health and mobility constraints as a rationale for adopting household Internet services a lot of that, but we also have to pay attention to what's going on in the service market itself. And when I talk about the service market not just government services, health care, public transportation, you name it as more and more services themselves migrate to online delivery models, it's going to be and has become increasingly difficult for many people, including older adults, the ones I spoke with anyways, just to be able to get things done within a reasonable amount of time, because of this digital enclosure. And so I keep going back to that term de facto compulsory it's not there is a sizable population of what I would call disinterested users in an amongst the older adult population. But I think to crack that not, in particular, we need to do so before they're kind of left out in the cold because it really won't be able to do much absent having access to this to these technologies.

G Ginny Bosomworth 46:36

And thank you, thank you for bringing it up, we have an interesting comment in our chat room which I will just bring forward to you folks so if you've scanned across the top of the screens who some of our participants are you can see that there are many older adults

who are participating today. And one of the posts, one of the posts was about our jam board, and how do you use it, and so it's simple things right, I mean, it's, there's many many little things that when you're learning for the first time you, it takes time to do it. To answer the question it's there's a little on the left hand side of your screen there's a little post it note if you go, hover your cursor over that post it note, you'll see it, then click on it and you can write your own post that note, and then we'll take it from there. So thank you for that. I think that these are great comments and I'm sure we could continue this particular discussion for quite some time to come, and it will probably again surface as we pose this next question for your consideration. And I think this is where you were going. Michel, and it's given that the internet is an essential service, how can Canada, ensure that internet service access, specifically prices are a forward affordable for low income households. That's a big question.

M   Michel Mersereau   47:53

Yeah. And, do you mind if I address that. I spent a lot of time researching and writing about the statutory, the government side of this equation. I mean, we're not going to roll back the clock and do what Estonia did and basically deploy the internet as a centralized federal infrastructural undertaking that's just not going to happen. Okay, so the commercial market is there it is the primary provisioner of broadband services there's nothing we can do about it. I think that what we could be doing better in Canada. In the latest telecommunications review panel spoke a little bit too, is the fact that regulation is overwhelmingly centralized at the federal level, I think is a problem for stuff, we need to diffuse or we need to download authority and responsibility not just to provinces, but I would suggest to local municipalities should be primary stakeholders in this. We have lots of examples in Canada, of publicly subsidized and essential services that are not necessarily provisioned by the government but the government absolutely plays an intervening role in health care is a fantastic example of that. You've got a private tier based system with the government, acting as an intervener. Okay, so there's lots of different opportunities and ways to go about that. I think it's the province of Ontario and many provinces, for example, in there so provincial social housing policies were just to include broadband service in amongst the basic allowable utilities that should be provisioned, there's one step right there. Okay, so there's lots of different solutions to try to address the barriers on the retail services side of things. So, that's my response to that, but I think I think federal oversight has been uniquely problematic in Canada. Going back the past 10 or 15 years.

G   Ginny Bosomworth   50:11

Thank you, I appreciate those remarks and one thing that the Ryerson Leadership Lab

does is position policy papers so all of these comments are important for consideration as we continue to look to the future. So thank you for that, and others, how else would you like to contribute and respond to this question about how do we make this accessible. Looks like you're thinking yeah I was gonna say I can see your mind working Karen so tell us.

Karen Wong 50:38

Yeah. So I just like to add on what Michel just talked about internet access, so I want to acknowledge that, indeed, when we look at the classroom level there are many amazing advocacy work. Probably because I come from a background of Social Work. So I have the opportunity to work with many people on the front lines, and I just want to acknowledge that in the classroom level. There are many seniors organization with lots of passion trying to bring up the issue about the cost of the internet, and the speed of the Internet to the government, and also to the wider society, one very good example is 411 Senior Center which I have the privilege to work with. So they try to advocate on the challenges seniors are facing, and many of the applicants themselves are seniors facing day to day challenge on access to technology. And I think there are lots of positive feedback in the society. And one of the very direct impact is that I believe many of you know that recently, not recently, or at least have already been for a while is that TELUS has the $10 Internet plan, and it is for more disadvantaged group, and it's a collaboration advocacy whereby 411 Senior Center and many other grass-root organizations are not necessarily senior communities in their surfaces, but organization are working with other vulnerable population for example, of people with a disability. So I just want to acknowledge that that's just there lots of great work, apparently, in the community. And I also just want to make a note, I couldn't recall. Oh, its Caroline, I really like your idea about intergeneration collaboration, and the idea of placement. And I think one thing which is very important because I believe many of those placements are offered. They are offered by communities Senior Services. So I think one of the challenge to reach the senior sub business up facing is about the continuation of the programs, and I found like many of the funding currently received by community senior center they are very divided and very project based, and it's quickly be quite challenging as it is for some of the talents of in the community seniors to continue to stay. Many of them can only stay by part of base funding. I think that's really, really, sad to see those talents with lots of knowledge and still to go just because of lack of funding. So, in long term how we can address that issue I think it will be. Yeah, something we need to think about. Yeah,

Caroline Grammer 54:09

I think Karen that one. I mean these are just things popping up in my brain, the training

the trainer I think when you talk about sustainability. I think training, older adults who have now been trained can train each other and sort of seniors for seniors and that's, that's going to be a more sustainable way in which to pass down the knowledge, frankly, and share the knowledge, because students come and go, you're right and it's temporary, but if students could focus on a portion of it and maybe that's part of the each agency that's out there servicing the community or servicing their institutional settings, could get the students to train these older adults to be trainers once they get to a certain level, and I think for older adults, it's something that you know it's a raise on debt, or really it's, you've now, you're now contributing back into the community, something very very meaningful and needed. And there's some power in that, because the older adults do know more than what we know as a younger generation navigating and what it's like to experience the digital world which brings me to clicking, which I do actually have an issue with clicking, and this is about web design, and I think this has to be transmitted back to the people who design their webs, young people are designing these, these platforms, and for example with the vaccine rollout, the number of, I always clamp the clicks, how many clicks does it take to get me to what I want. And I know most older adults three it's a three strike rule three clicks and you're out. If I can't get to what I want. Within three clicks. I'm disinterested I'm frustrated. I don't want to do this anymore and I think there's something very fair about that in that has to be addressed is that it can get so complicated to get the simple answer, and then when you try it on the phone, of course, you get nobody because nobody's there anymore, they're all on the internet. And I think, web design has to have be more global in terms of or have a pluralistic lens on it in terms of how we even design the Internet to navigate it, because it really a number of these websites are impossible, you're clicking you're clicking you have to even know what to click, you have to know what words to use when you're searching in Google. These are things that are more intrinsic to the generations that's been taught how to do it, and live through it with older adults, they don't even know the words to use. And they did, they don't even know, Jamboard exists, the awareness piece isn't there and so all of those pieces need to be taught, and given to older adults, and then maybe they can give them to each other.

G Ginny Bosomworth   57:09

Exactly. It's a great comment, we actually had a couple of people that come in training seniors resonates strongly with them, and I would give you a specific example. It was mentioned that I was the President for the LIFE Institute which is a lifelong learning organization here in Toronto our members are over there, older adults. And during this pandemic, we went to immediately converted to an online delivery of courses for our members and the uptake was surprisingly good it was very strong, actually. But one thing we needed to do to ensure success was to identify people who were comfortable with the technology. Zoom technology and they we train them to train our members, they became

our Zoomers, if you will, and that was accessible and sharing of information and ideas so I think it's very important to do that, which leads to another question coming from the chat room and that question is, how do we encourage older adults to participate in some of these recreational programs that are shifting to the online platform so that they continue to have access and connectivity to a world which is increasingly one step removed.

C Caroline Grammer 58:18

And my students are actually involved in that placement, they're developing virtual programs for this as part of their virtual placements because they're all remote they can't go in to the frontline. And they're very popular, they're doing chair yoga, they're doing arts and crafts, they're making virtual word searches and crosswords they're doing small group. Just cooking. And so these older adults now, these older adults know how to use Zoom or mercury or all these tips and have the devices and have the high speed. I think faith based organizations should should dial into this because I had I'm aware that a number of faith based organizations are very successful in engaging their members. On to the virtual platform to run their programs that's another area of access. I think the libraries are one of the most. The greatest sort of ubiquitous use because they overlap all neighborhoods are almost all neighborhoods. And so they would know they're older adults who all pretty much go to the library. I think that and again, not working in silos but actually working together in order to engage these older adults but we can't engage them if they're not, they don't even have the devices, or the access

G Ginny Bosomworth 59:43

Point, Eric, I can tell you're thinking, oh yeah,

E Eric Craven 59:47

I wanted to just to echo like many of my programs in the last 10 years. I've actually built that in where we learn something and then they teach it to somebody else, or we we work that way or create, or kind of built into it exchanges to where if you have a group of seniors working on a project say we were doing an oral history project a few years ago, and then build into it, um, chances for people to share like if they're if there's, if there's lack of access to devices and stuff, one person in the room might have an extra phone that they got and they don't even know why they got it from tell us or something and then they say well I can lend this or this is how I did it, and then it creates a kind of a context so because I one thing and maybe this will be controversial to say, but the, the, some of the seniors I work, they don't want to play the role of the senior in intergenerational dialogue. They don't want to be that, like they get, and literally, I have a senior in one of my groups,

who's doing a video kind of during this time of COVID because I had a digital literacy project, program this year, funded by new horizons for seniors for digital storytelling and we were going to come to the library and people are going to do. And I work really participant led storytelling could mean any kind of digital thing could be photography, could be a podcast, it could be anything, but we had to do it all on Zoom, and that was that was tricky so we were all, and people were having none, but in some ways it was a blessing to that in that it was a lot of a lot more time for me but we, everybody had to do whatever they needed to do with whatever they add at home and they had to do it so in years previously they would have learned how to do it with whatever I had at the library, and now they had to do it with, with these things so I think that's an interesting little piece there but I think. I think that the piece about how we get people in interested is just definitely like those kind of those kind of conversations about what what is what is and I feel like the digital, digital media piece and digital literacy can be a really an excuse to get out and talk to people, even if it's just remotely, and get out and kind of make those make those kind of connections, and how you scale that up like I'm really impressed with this panel, you know because you're talking about things that are really and I worked at a library with, you know, nine equivalent staff, and I'm doing these kinds of projects and and you know and immersed in that. And so, how would I scale up that thing Well I think there's definitely ways to do it and every frustration that we're talking about the piece about internet access, I mean I research everything and I found that TELUS thing but it's a mobile thing right it's not Wi Fi, and it's not this or that, and so you know I'm literally just collecting old things and giving them to people. But that's how do you scale that up I mean if you know like so, it's, there's not some of that, but I think I think just, you know, engaging with the interest of their your whatever group that you're working with and, and letting them really kind of drive it, and then offer it you know will really, really helps us things.

G Ginny Bosomworth   1:02:47
But yeah, we have just a few more minutes and the question that's popping up on this chat on occasion has to do with security, so frequently older adults are targets, Right. And when we lacked confidence with the technology to begin with we're uncertain about what works, what doesn't and perhaps that inhibits our participation, but any of you like to comment a little bit on that.

C Caroline Grammer   1:03:09
Well we're running that in our program, it's one of the mandated parts of our participant compensation compensatory package. The first thing they learn is the jargon, the next thing we do is develop an email and concurrently. We teach them safety and security, and

we actually have quizzes for them. And when we give them succession so every session we quiz them, we, we have a design where we've fake email them, and they, if they click on it, we have a little, oh, this was phishing, just so that they would know and they're aware that this is happening. So we recognize that security and safety is paramount, and we're trying to encourage people to realize that they as long as they're aware and they're used to what is unsafe and things like don't forward these jokes or whatever it is, there's viruses on them. Always know who the sender is, And if you know who the sender is but you don't trust this is a strange thing to ask. Email the sender directly so there's lots of pieces we put into the safety session, I do want to go back to the engagement piece really quickly with Michel because he touched on something I think is quite profound. Older adults are willing to take up learning the internet and engaging in these devices, if it's relevant to them. So we have to find what's relevant to them. Their target based their target based learning group. So for example if their grandchildren are relevant to them, and Facebook and learning how to text is relevant to them, they're going to learn how to do it as long as their grandchildren are face booking and texting them back which the stats show that more older adults more grandparents are are allowed into their Facebook and their, their social platforms than parents so that speaks volumes as well. I think the engagement piece. I know with my mom. It was coupons. So she got the flip that she wasn't even willing to turn on a computer, but she learned independently how to use a tablet and a phone, because she had this flip app and she could bring it right to the store and show them in price comparing it mattered to her it was target based learning. So I think that's, Michelle, you had a huge point there in your research, uncovering that it is a target based type of learning.

Michel Mersereau   1:05:36

Absolutely, and I'm glad you brought up the flip app because that came up across my, not just the older adult cohort, but across all my TCHC participants, and that's a not insignificant example of what I was talking about with regard to digital enclosure, because I think most of us can remember the days of getting the, you know the bulk coupons in the mailbox and things like that which have largely gone away. And this idea of that coupon flip book which is so important to people, and I had a number of participants who describe very similarly to a carpet to what Caroline just mentioned, I, I miss the coupons, I need the coupons and this is why I have this on my tablet right now.

Michel Mersereau   1:06:29

Yeah, but thank you thank you thank you for bringing that up but the idea of individually, the term I use is individuated needs. And that's really what my approach to this problem. Kind of looks at is, I mean there's commonalities in use across the border from one

household to the next, there's no question about that. But the unique ways in which individual households and individuals within those households adopt the technology, adopt the technologies into their routines, really ultimately mirrors what they value, and what they perceive as the affordance what they're going to get out of it. There were some of my participants who had little to no contact with close or immediate family members, sons, daughters or, or otherwise not a significant proportion but, but, but a proportion, None, those less and in those cases, mobility issues getting around booking wheel trends, you know, trying to call in for wheel trans which is almost next to impossible as I've been told these days versus booking it online. Simple things like that. The take it for granted stuff that's just part of our mundane activities, well I needed to do this and I couldn't do it anymore so my neighbor showed me how to do it, you know, and I'm not trying to oversimplify it it's not an oversimplification, but it is, I think highlights a very important touch point in terms of how we need to be looking at this issue, and giving the resources to the community itself, it's try and try to see that throughout the community, rather than say, from the literacy point of view, maybe a single point library is a great resource center centers are great but if somebody has a mobility issue or is not feeling well that day. Maybe it's easier if they can just call on or walk down the hall or something like that. So having as many of these resources in place as possible, especially for older adults that are, again, as in, was the case with my participants living independently on their own and attempting to stay that way.

G **Ginny Bosomworth**   1:08:47

That's important, and thank you for making that yeah, Karen, go ahead.

K **Karen Wong**   1:08:51

Yeah, I just like to be on what Michel say talking about like, and what Karen said about like individualize day needs but what I want to say is that every a group Michel, like, or Joe like different people, they may use technology for many different reasons, and understanding the motivation behind why they want to use technology is very important, but among seniors, there are some commonalities, they are facing. So like what Michel just mentioned about like developing, like the resources and let the people to decide how they want to achieve. And I think if we speak from a human rights approach that the capability approach which means that it is. Everyone wants to achieve something differently. However, it is a human rights for the person to get the resources they need to achieve those individual needs. And the last thing I want to mention is that when I'm talking about intergenerational support indeed in my head I'm not thinking about student helping the seniors what I'm thinking is that for example, even for your life and there are many young seniors helping older seniors. And what I want to bring is that um they are

doing amazing things for example like senior sport cars and many of them are indeed retired, like 10 technician and computer even computer like scientists, so I'm thinking, some of them are coming from other professional they are professional, but now they have retired and they have, like, huge like experience working on this area. So when I'm thinking that like when Ginny talking about the difference between the young oh and the older I'm thinking about those things, and I think those people, they shouldn't like also to surface for free, they should be rewarded with pay as well so that's why in our center and if all you left and we prioritize hiring, seniors, if they're willing to offer the services.

G Ginny Bosomworth 1:10:55

Yeah, terrific, terrific comments on so many different topics presented we could go on with this conversation for quite a while, and there's a lot of interest from our audience in terms of the chat room and the activity that we've had there. So, for me personally as someone that is in this demographic. Thank you, each of you for the work that you're doing in our behalf I deeply appreciate it. I think it's a look to the future. And that matters so thank you so much. And with that I will pass it back to you, Sam, and you Thank you.

S Sam Andrey 1:11:27

Thanks so much and thanks to everyone for really excellent insights, I learned a ton and the chat, and the Jamboards were just buzzing, we had to add a whole other Jamboard. And so we really appreciate everyone's engagement. We will be sending out a copy of this recording, and the transcript, along with many of the links that were shared in the chat we try to create a summary of the resources shared so thank you for doing that. The Jamboard will also remain open into the future if you want to refer back to it, or add more thoughts after this conversation, these are you know complex issues, this is a six part series that we're hoping to dig into different parts of the digital divide challenge in Canada and how they're interconnected, we're really excited about our next one. So our next one is on May 19. At the same time noon Eastern, nine Pacific and we're excited to have Canada's Minister of digital government, the Honorable Joyce Murray, joining us along with a great panel to talk about digital accessibility and the challenges for people with disabilities. And so, you know we can we can ask her the Minister of digital government about the number of clicks for some of these services, maybe. And so you can register in the chat. We're going to share the link for for our next discussion on May 19. Thanks again to everyone for participating in this, and we look forward to having you again at a future session, and we're going to take what we learned today, and summarize it as well and we'll share that as well. Thanks so much everyone. Have a great day.