‘New Clicks’ - developing user-led digital literacies in older adults within Scottish public libraries

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*Background*

Research details that our present ‘digital-by-default' society structurally supports inequalities, where users without the requisite skills to enable meaningful engagement in the digital world are at an increasingly severe disadvantage (Eynon & Malmberg, 2021). These disparities are particularly felt by older adults, who while already challenged by structural issues related to their age cohort (e.g socioeconomic status, health problems, a mistrust of technology) see the quality of their tangible access to digital resources negatively impacted by such deficits (Hunsaker & Hargittai, 2018).

Scottish public policy currently focuses on developing digital literacies from economic and school-based educational perspectives (Scottish Government, 2021), despite research suggesting that around 22% of adults in the UK still lack the basic digital skills needed for everyday life (Lloyds Bank, 2022). Older adults are disproportionately affected herein, and there are no existing equivalent policies or actions that focus on developing their particular strategic needs.

Public libraries are uniquely placed to respond to these challenges, given their centrality in public life and the high levels of trust they enjoy (Barrie et al., 2021). Public libraries can also address the compound sociological issues faced by older adults in holistic, inclusive and participatory ways, and as ‘leaders in community digital skills training’ (Detlor et al., 2022) can be the vehicle to progress new user-led approaches to digital literacies.

*Objectives*

This project will utilise a Participatory Action Research methodology to examine the CILIP Information Literacy Model (CILIP, 2018) in developing user-led interventions aimed at improving digital literacies in older adults. It will do this through longitudinal engagement with an established 60-plus age group of older adults comprising around 40 participants from within the Scottish public library sector. The project will focus development on user-led principles to ensure that areas of relevant concern are addressed with sustainable and scalable solutions presented.

References

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**Keywords**

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