

Putting the pieces together



Demographics and SCLS

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Today, I'm going to be talking about demographics and demographic trends and how SCLS can help its member libraries cope with these changes.



Wisconsin and our system certainly has changing demographics:

--Certain areas of the state continue to have rapid growth. From 2000-2004, Madison had the state's largest population growth for a metropolitan area. Adams County has the 2nd highest growth rate for a county in the state.

--We have a rapidly aging population, particularly in rural areas. An in-migration of individuals of retirement age, combined with an out-migration of younger people increases this trend. By 2020, the number of 60+ individuals in the state will increase from 1 in 5 to 1 in 3.

--The state is also becoming more diverse. Projections for 2025 include around a 7% increase in non-white populations from 2005, which translates to about ½ million additional people in non-white census categories.

--From 1999 to 2004, the state's poverty rates has increased from 8.7% to 10.7%, moving us up in the rankings of states from 44th to 37th.

But just looking at these figures and overall trends isn't enough to guide how we should change in the next few years.



No one would ever think of two communities in the system as being completely the same, but there is the temptation to think about demographic changes at a state-wide or system-wide level.

But the difficulty of looking at the demographics of the state or the system or even a county is that what is happening in one region of the state or system may be completely different from the rest of the state or system.

Let's look at Adams County as an example. As I mentioned, Adams County was the 2nd fastest growing county in the state from 2000-2004, though it is not projected to keep growing at such a fast rate. It also has one of the highest poverty rates in the state, at 11%, putting it as the 7th poorest county in the state. And the rate of growth in seniors is higher than the rest of the state, with a projected 42% of the population to be over 60 by 2030 (from 21% in 2000).

But the demographics of Rome, a municipality within Adams County, are completely different. Looking at 2000 Census data for comparison's sake, only 3.7% of residents are below the poverty level (compared to 9.0% for the county). The median income is over \$5,000 higher per year.

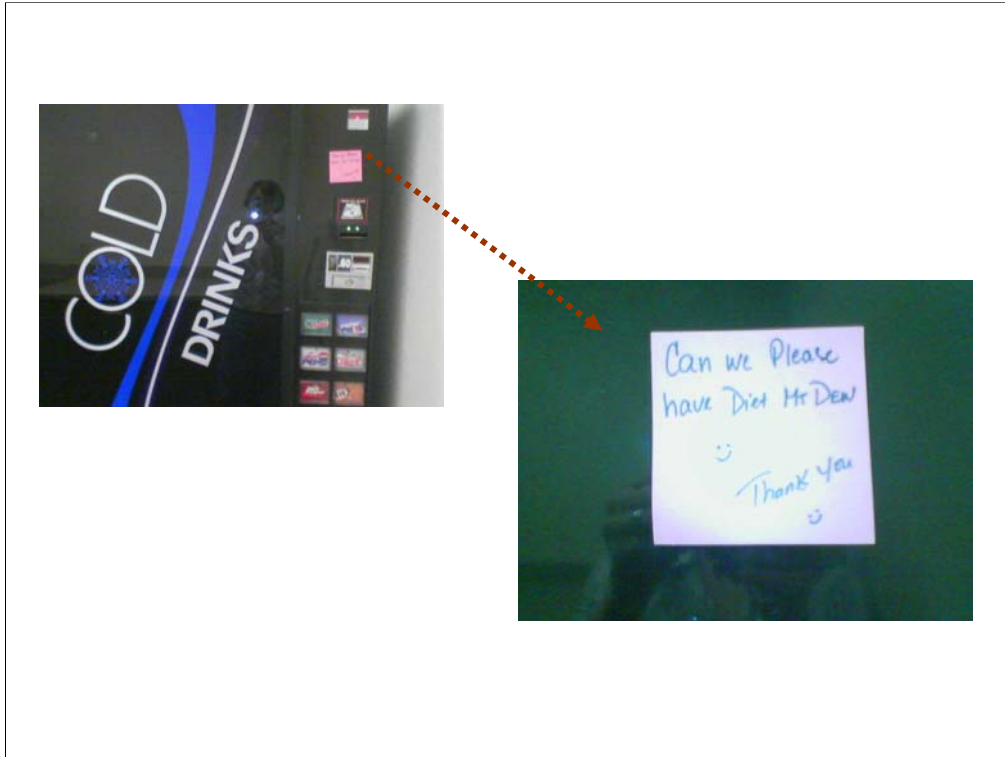
So, even within a county, a "one size fits all" approach may not be the best approach.



And it's important to keep in mind that even within demographic groups, you can have great variations.

This is Mary Blair Immel. Mary's "My Turn" essay was featured in the July 31, 2006. From her essay: "I can also set the clock on her microwave and program my VCR to record one show while watching another. I use a computer and do research online. I understand enough of the rules of football and the intricacies of a baseball scorecard to be an enthusiastic fan of both sports."

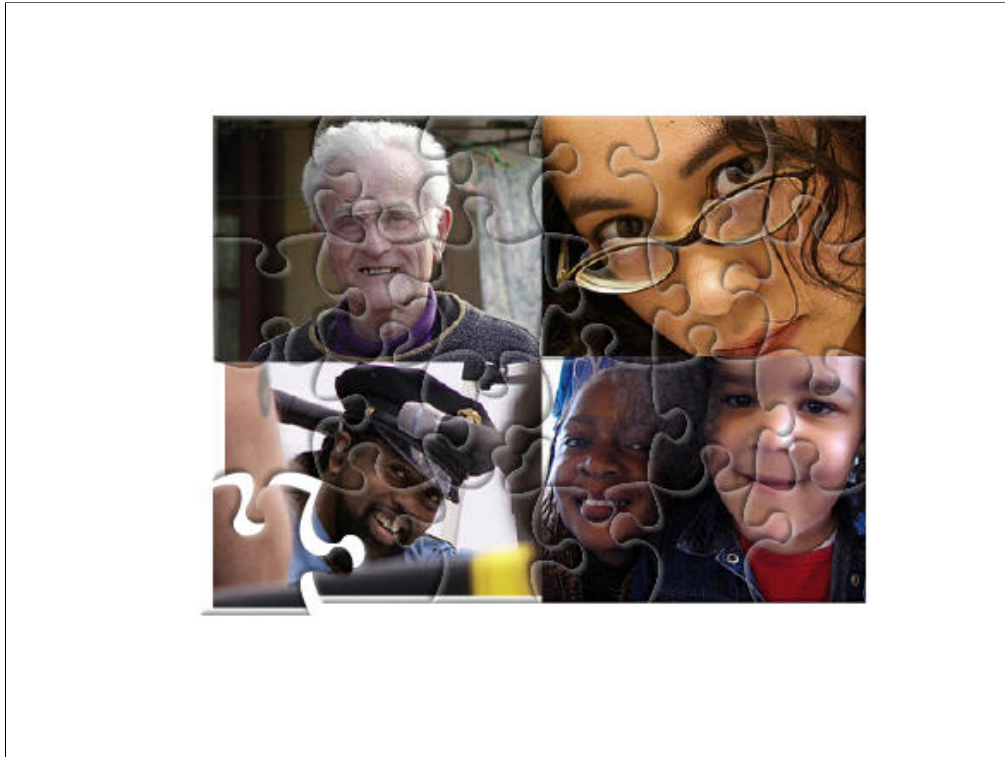
Mary is about 1 year older than my mom (who would never forgive me if I put her picture here). But my mom has never owned a computer. She doesn't set the VCR to record at all....but she's also a football nut 😊



And there's also an ongoing trend toward personalization and customization that is shaping the world around us. People expect to be able to get what they want, and only what they want, when they want it.

They want a seamless, simple, customizable experience.

They want to be able to provide opinions and feedback, and find others who share those opinions.



Think of all of these demographics changes as a giant puzzle. The key to putting all the pieces together is user-centric services. Our focus as libraries needs to be what our users want and need.

How can a library do this? Let's talk about a process and how SCLS can help.



Discovering the pieces...

First, they need to discover what pieces of the demographic puzzle are part of their community: What are the demographic trends affecting me? Who is in my community, and how is that changing? How are these pieces being served or not currently by my library or my community?

How can SCLS help with this?

We can start by emphasizing the importance of knowing your community. We need to convey to libraries how important this is, in all aspects of library service: advocacy, advertising, fundraising, long-range planning, budgeting.

We can teach libraries how to find and interpret demographic reports.

Or we could possibly do some of this discovery and interpretation for them.

We could investigate and offer pilot projects with new technologies to help libraries get a clearer picture of the demographic makeup and how that impacts circulation and use of the library. GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology allow the mapping of circulation data by location to discover where circulation is coming from.



Understanding each piece...

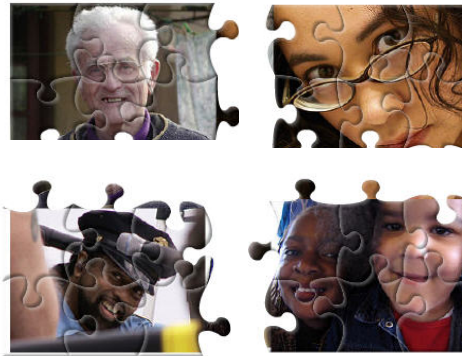
Next, the library needs to fully understand each piece represented in their community: Discovering what pieces are in a community are not enough. A library needs to understand what the needs are of each community, and who the community is, foster relationships with the community, and really try to understand who they are.

SCLS can help them to fully understand each piece.

We can teach them about various communities, help them understand the perception of the community, and teach them how to develop relationships with different communities. A couple of examples are the “Bridges out of Poverty” and the “Lifelong Access Libraries initiative” trainings which are under development for future continuing education sessions.

We can develop partnerships which help us understand and provide services at the system level that will benefit communities in many libraries. We can help libraries develop partnerships in their own communities with other groups providing services to various “pieces” and with the group itself.

We can help libraries with surveys and focus groups of various “pieces”. We can provide survey tools. We could provide expertise on conducting focus groups, and possibly provide people to conduct focus groups.



Providing services...

Then, the library needs to provide services for the various pieces, while not forgetting that each component is made up of individuals, and that all of the pieces together complete the puzzle.

Perhaps this is the area where we can find the most help.

SCLS can develop general-purpose services that serve a wide variety of communities, and that the individual libraries then don't have to do themselves (and in some cases, they could not do it themselves.). Online databases are a good example of this.

We can provide services that free-up library staff to focus on serving these unique communities. Telus is a good example of this. Another possibility is a technical help-desk service, so patrons could get technical support on various library services centrally. And many of the things we already do, from consulting services to graphic and building design services, helps with this.

We can provide services or opportunities with choices for member libraries. Summer Library Program performer funding and technology training grants are good examples of this. Libraries can choose the best way to use the funds to serve their specific community.

We can provide opportunities for experimentation and pilot projects, giving individual libraries or small groups of libraries opportunities to try services that



Recognizing individuals...

It's important not to forget that people are individuals, and that they want to be able to share their experience and customize their world experience.

SCLS can help libraries focus on individuals.

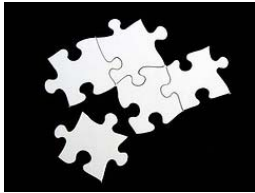
We can offer opportunities for individuals to express their opinions. We can help libraries use survey tools like Counting Opinions to get feedback from individuals and measure collective library satisfaction.

We can provide opportunities for users to express themselves by creating projects like the Teen Read blog, and also by providing a platform for libraries to do these sorts of projects themselves, and help educate them on how to do that, and why they would want to.

We can advertise and encourage individuals to participate in things like Open WorldCat, where they have the opportunity to submit reviews and comments that will be available to library patrons around the world.

We can develop resources that are more geographic-independent so that individuals, no matter what community they are in, can find library opportunities that are important to them. For example, I can picture us encouraging libraries to use OPAL, our new web-conferencing tool, to offer programming to patrons, and encouraging all members to publicize these opportunities to their communities.

For more information...



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Providing service focused on a library's community is the providing the "best possible service" to that community.

It's natural for SCLS to help with such an endeavor, and hopefully, help libraries "put the pieces together" in the puzzle of their community.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Image Sources

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Slide 3:

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/adams.pdf](http://www.dot.state.wi.us/travel/maps/docs/counties/adams.pdf)

Image Sources

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wilhei/109403331/>

Demographic information sources

American Community Surveys, 2000-2004 and Decennial
Census, 2000

http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

Wisconsin Population 2030:

http://www.doa.state.wi.us/docs_view2.asp?docid=2114

Wisconsin's Population Projections: 1995 to 2025

<http://www.census.gov/population/projections/state/9525rank/wiprsrel.txt>

Wisconsin Workforce Profile:

http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/oea/cp_pdf/wicpw.pdf