



GreyNet - Stage 2

Needs Assessment & Analysis – Stage 2: On-line Communications

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document is part of the second stage of the Greynet instructional design project. Its purpose is to provide information to support the development of an instructional strategy and training materials for Greynet - On-line Communications. It covers the first three stages of the model below.

The Greynet project has adopted the Dick & Carey 9 step instructional design model.

1. Identify instructional Goals
2. Conduct Instructional Analysis
3. Identify Entry Behaviors, Characteristics
4. Write Performance Objectives
5. Develop Criterion Referenced Test Items
6. Develop Instructional Strategy
7. Develop and Select Instructional Materials
8. Design and Conduct Formative Evaluations
9. Design and Conduct Summative Evaluations

The document's approach is to identify the needs and context of the second stage of the project, its participants and stakeholders. These needs have been assessed against project and environmental constraints and opportunities. This process identifies the project's priorities: instructional & non-instructional. As part of the process a Learners Analysis is also conducted. This helps identify who learners are that are being targeted – the 50yrs+ (who happen to be a very diverse group indeed).

The information and outcomes reached here are the result of many people who have actively contributed to this report, especially the representative members from the Geelong and Elwood/St Kilda areas who attended and actively contributed to the focus groups sessions.

The Greynet project is now progressing towards developing and delivering the next stage of its training: Email, Forums and Chat – all different forms of on-line communications over the internet. The training approach and materials will be piloted as part of a developing partnership between the:

- Elwood/St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre (ESNLC) &
- Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE).

Trevor Kealy
Greynet Project Leader

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

2.1. Project Description & Problem Identification

The Greynet project aims to provide the 50 years and over residents of the City of Port Phillip and wider area with the opportunity to gain skills and confidence to access the Internet in order to:

- (a) Access a global network of information, including Victoria's proposed 'Electronic Service Delivery' (a plan to make many government services accessible on-line).
- (b) Introduce and support people in entering and using the WWW and its many forms of communications: Email, Chat, Newsgroups and virtual communities
- (c) Reduce isolation
- (d) Establish a GreyNet web site of local information with links to other relevant sites.
- (e) Develop an active community of GreyNetters

2.1.1. Problem Statement

There is an array of problems to be addressed for the project to succeed. It is perceived that there:

- Is not enough awareness of what the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) is and can offer to older people
- Are inappropriate resources (books, documents, training etc.) available to support the older generation in adopting the Internet
- Little or no skills in the tools, processes and procedures for accessing and using communications packages on the Net
- There is a lack of infrastructure to support people's journey into technology
- Is a lack of accessible and suitable facilities to use and practice skills in the Net

2.2. Context of problem

2.2.1. Knowledge & Application of Emerging Technologies

The target audience of GreyNet has minimal understanding of today's emerging technologies: Internet, Email & Chat. They lack awareness of the possibilities and opportunities these technologies offer. They also lack awareness of the variety of services currently available online: banking for example. They are not aware of plans by organisation's such as the Victorian Government to place all of its services online by the year 2001.

These statements are based on the findings from several focus group sessions (see appendix A). The purpose of the sessions was to determine people's views and needs about these new technologies and their application to daily life. Some had heard of proposed moves to put things online and to close the face to face facilities. Most had not! This aspect created the most discussion and concern as many felt the move to doing things by computer was dehumanising, frightening, generated more unemployment and reduced the face to face part of doing business. Others agreed with these comments but also saw that technology created more leisure time, was good for life and helped in many ways. When asked what they felt was needed to deal with today's technologies the common theme was the need to be accepting, be open minded, need to understand how its all works and know what is happening and to reduce anxieties about computers. A key point was that people need to be kept informed and that appropriate, accessible, training is required to support people. It was felt that this was not happening as well as it should: GreyNet though was seen as a good example of a project trying to do something about this problem – create awareness and offer opportunities to learn.

See appendix A for a detailed account of the focus group sessions.

2.2.2. Largest Group on the Internet

The Internet was once thought of as the place where the younger generation would reside – their world. Other brave souls, such as seniors, might venture in to cyberspace and toy with what they find. Fundamentally though, Internet equals Young!

Oh how wrong this idea turned out to be! Older adults now represent the fastest growing sector of Internet users. According to United Nations estimates, by the year 2000 there will be 590 million people over 60 years, increasing to 1.1 billion by 2025. As the population ages older persons may well become by far the largest group on the Internet.”

2.2.3. Barriers to Participation

The forecasts of being the largest group on the Internet gives the impression that it is easy for older persons to get on board the Internet, and that everyone is doing it. However, the growing population aged over 50 years is characterised by having little or no computer experience, but greater awareness of their life

options. While many are making the journey there are many more that are faced with an array of barriers to participating. Some of these barriers are:

- lack of confidence
- lack of appropriate support
- availability of appropriate and affordable courses
- limited ability to access the technology – unaffordable/unavailable/inaccessible
- in some cases, their isolation

2.2.4. Government Directions

“All Government services will be available on-line by 2001”

Jeff Kennett, Victorian Premier, 19 November 1996

The following is taken from the Victorian Government publication: Online Government 2001 – from vision to reality 6 May 1998.

‘The government’s decision to deliver services electronically offers not just the opportunity to automate but also to integrate services in a way that enhances their delivery to the community. ...Those requesting service will only need to identify the services required, and not need to know which department or agency is responsible for the delivery of the service’.

The success of the government’s plan to place services on-line will depend on more than just technology. It will need to ensure that a broad range of the community is able to access the service. There are, according to Terry Wright, ESD Project Manager for Multimedia Victoria’s Department of State Development, “four inherent challenges in what we are doing and they come in the areas of: culture, legislation, organisation and technology. The Greynet project seeks to address the area of cultural challenge. The growing population aged over fifty years is characterised by having little or no computer experience but a greater awareness of their life options. Although the technology is being put into place by government (e.g. free Internet access at libraries and the ESD project), the tools with which to address the educational barriers are not yet available. Older people, particularly those with low incomes, are at risk of becoming even more isolated.

2.2.5. International Year of Older Persons

1999 has been declared the International Year of Older Persons (IYOP). The theme for the year is ‘towards a society for all ages’. A conference was held in Australia in 1997 in response to planning for IYOP. The outcomes are detailed in publication: ‘Conference for Older Australians – Interim Report June 1998’.

In regards to this project the following findings from the report are seen to be relevant:

Information - Technology – Communications

‘New technology can provide opportunities but it may also have its drawbacks’.

Issues identified:

1. The need for accurate, up to date and easily accessible information on services and activities available to meet older people’s needs
2. New technology provides exciting opportunities for older people but it can also act as a barrier if it is not explained or made easily accessible to them
3. Communications systems need to take into account the particular needs of older people

The following are some of the practical ideas identified:

- More ‘older person friendly’ designed technology
- Instructions on equipment to be raised and in contrasting colour
- Encouraging schools, libraries and TAFE colleges to be points of computer access and training for older people, and using students as teachers
- The development of ‘train the trainer’ programs for older people so that they can teach each other about technology
- Information technology companies to sponsor and become involved in setting up information stall at shopping centres, community organisations and sponsoring computer education for older persons
- Information to be located in more prominent public places, at eye level or lower, in legible plain English and different languages
- Government information to be more accessible and friendly for older people

Priority areas for initiatives in IYOP:

- That initiatives to coordinate and simplify information for older people be undertaken at all levels of Government
- That initiatives be undertaken to assist older people understand better the new technology associated with banking so that they can more effectively manage this aspect of their lives
- That educational initiatives for older people to learn about computer technology be undertaken

Employment – Education – Skills

‘As people remain healthy and active for longer, their interest in pursuing employment and education continues’.

Issues Identified:

1. There is a need for the knowledge and skills of people who are older, and perhaps no longer in paid work, to be recognised and utilised more fully in the community

2. There is a need to expand opportunities for older people to continue to acquire new knowledge and skills through life-long learning opportunities
3. There is a need to establish 'support' mechanisms for older people who want to take up a particular area work or learning but have not got the confidence to 'go it alone'
4. There is a urgent need to include aging and intergenerational issues as part of the educational curriculum

The following are some of the practical ideas identified:

- Provision of training for older people on new technology, e.g. computers which can enhance their capacity for further education or for learning new skills
- Encourage schools to include more of a focus on intergenerational issues and cultural history through inviting older people to talk about their life history, and/or careers with younger people

Priority areas for initiatives in IYOP:

- That development of training/educational opportunities for older people to advance their learning and continue to be able to apply their skills be promoted and supported
- That programs to maximise the benefits of utilising the knowledge and skills of older people in the workplace be supported

2.2.6. Community Development

There is in today's population a very large number of people who are over 50 years of age. As they reach the end of their working life they often find themselves with more time on their hands but smaller social networks. They become, over time, isolated.

In addressing these issues the Elwood/St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre seeks to have involved participants actively applying their new internet skills in establishing a local Internet relevance for the older population and building a local and wider community network.

2.2.7. GreyNet Program Support

The program relies on the community's members driving it. There will be guiding support from the Elwood St Kilda centre in aiding this community development - project leader Trevor Kealy.

2.2.8. Ability to Practice

Once people are trained in accessing the Internet, they need to find points of access to practice. Across the City of Port Phillip and greater Melbourne there are an array of access points for them: Skillsnet sites such as Elwood On-line, family and friends, libraries and Internet cafes.

People will need to be made aware of the need to practice, where they can do this, how much it will cost and if support is available: how much and what type.

2.2.9. Support Post Training

Post training, people will require support in applying and developing their skills in using the communications facilities on the Internet. The availability of this support and the levels of it will vary considerably. As with the local libraries, there will be no formal on-site support at the Elwood St Kilda centre.

There will be a need to develop a support infrastructure. It is envisaged that the initial demonstrations, training and supplied reference materials will initially support people. After this, people are basically on their own. This is where the community development components of the project come to bear. There needs to be a forum where people can come together to discuss and share their experiences and address questions they have.

In regards to forum there is a community of Greynetters being developed where people can meet regularly, face-to-face, to discuss and learn. This will be further developed by providing support through the on-line community of Greynetters.

2.2.10. Technical Knowledge & Constraints of Chat

The choice of communications packages for the project must enable all to participate. Packages that require practically zero technical knowledge and skills are preferable. It is seen that anything above this will simply disable a great number of people from being able to participate.

The ease of use and availability of the Chat communications packages varies greatly. Some of them require a person to have in-depth knowledge of Windows 95, communication setups, downloading and unzipping of files and program installation procedures. These packages are for example: Eudora, ICQ, MIRC, I-Chat and Microsoft & Netscape browser's email tools. Others only require you to fill out a form, send a request, choose the web based tool and then start using the package. These packages are for example: Free Email – Hotmail, Start, Yahoo, Excite.. Java based chat at sites like ThirdAge, Seniornet. As for availability, community access sites such as libraries and skillsnet sites vary greatly in their technical capabilities and offerings. Most will not allow downloading and installation of programs. Most do not have programs such as Eudora, ICQ, MIRC and I-Chat installed. They simply enable access to the Internet and WWW. This then becomes the lowest common denominator.

This project must focus on using the web based applications on offer such as the free email packages, simple discussion boards and to show people how to choose the Javachat method of Chatting on the web. This will ensure that everyone can participate.

2.2.11. Methods of Interacting in Virtual Communities

There are a myriad of virtual communities on the WWW. In regards to the target audience some examples are ThirdAge, Seniornet, GardenWeb, Yahoo

Clubs and CommunityWare. They provide an array of methods for people to interact and share experiences. They offer up to date information on a wide variety of topics and also offer an array of support services, for example for those new to the technology to those who have recently lost a loved one. They enable people from across the globe to create and participate in a new form of community.

There are two (excluding Email) major methods of interaction in virtual communities. One is the Forum: asynchronous communications. This is a web discussion board setup where topics are posted to a board for people to read and respond to. The responses are all linked (threaded) so that you can follow the conversation and flow of the topic. Some boards are moderated by having someone review responses before posting to the board. The alternative to this is free form discussion where anyone can post anything. The content of the discussion can be kept and reviewed when desired. The second way is Chat Rooms: synchronous communications. This is where real time conversations occur offering real interactivity on the WWW. In contrast to Forums the conversation in Chat cannot be saved – it is momentary.

There is a varying level of support and materials to help people start using these communications tools. There is very little for Web Discussion Boards compared to Chat Rooms. An assumption might be that discussion boards are no different to following links across web pages, therefore there is no need to offer in depth explanation. It is intuitively clear! Whereas, Chat Rooms have reams of explanation and offer chat areas for those who are new to the experience. They usually call them Newbies. The best approach to learning to participate in these Chat Rooms is to join one and enter its Newbie area. This is where you find people of similar experience trying to come to grips with it all. Usually a more experienced person will be participating so as to facilitate your progress into the vast array of Chat Rooms on these sites.

GreyNet plans to have its own community on the WWW with its own Forum and Chat Room areas. It is expected that once people have been trained in using the existing communities they can progress towards developing their own presence on the WWW. This is where the GreyNet project sees itself playing a role by supporting people in creating and growing their own Virtual Community. As part of this plan the partnership with Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE) is seen as crucial to success. They have a large community of web users who want to expand their skills and use of the WWW. They want to Chat. The plan is to develop and grow the community between the two areas and to build a virtual community starting with the people in Geelong and Elwood/St Kilda areas.

2.2.12. Preferred Style of Training - approach

For this group the message is quite clear in regards to the approach most preferred: face-to-face. The idea of learning purely from a book or from a screen is considered completely unsuitable to learning about computers and applications on them. There is the need for immediacy of feedback and ability to interact with others (sociability aspects).

2.3. Nature of Gap

2.3.1. What exists

The target group is the 50+ of the community who are skilled in using Internet browsers: Netscape & Internet Explorer, to access the World Wide Web (WWW). These people may or may not have participated in introductory courses on the WWW, such as those offered at ESNLC, SkillsNet sites, libraries and private providers. They have limited knowledge of the facilities and application of communications tools available on the Internet. Many do not have their own computer with access to the Internet, they rely on community access sites or friends and family. Many are finding that the journey into the Internet is requiring them to have to learn so much more about technology. The problem here is that there are not the courses or facilities to enable this to happen. A clear message is the concern about everything going on-line and thus the loss of social contact – something that is very important to this group. There is a real need to have the opportunities available to people to be able to participate and learn about these new technologies and how they fit into their lives. This requires programs that are appropriately designed for the group – so much of it is not.

2.3.2. What should be

According to the Greynet Project Leader the 50+ should:

- be made aware of what is on the Internet, its relevance to them and its useability so that they can make an informed choice on how to apply themselves to this emerging technology
- have the opportunity to access the Internet and its communications facilities
- have ways of gaining the knowledge and skills to be able to ‘surf the net’ and communicate globally
- have access to a variety of training, that is relatively inexpensive, that supports their lifelong learning
- be able to develop a face-to-face and virtual community, making the best use of the Internet as a tool for themselves
- be enabled and facilitated to grow to a level where the group can develop and manage its own community web site

2.4. Suited to an instructional solution?

As with the first needs analysis for Greynet (July 1997) the project continues to have a complex array of aspects to it. The project requires a community development strategy to facilitate the change that is being envisioned for the 50+ group. The growing of the virtual community requires this strategy along with a set of skills to enable participation and application of the communications possibilities of the Internet.

The instructional aspects for this part are the attainment of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in what communications via the Net is all about and how to use the tools that enable participation in online communications; Email & Chat.

The training design, development and implementation strategy needs to be in sync with the overall community development strategy.

3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT & GOAL DEFINITION

3.1. Priorities for action

This project follows on from the previous Needs Assessment done in July 1997. For this stage the following are seen as the overall key project activities to be achieved:

- Develop a training project plan and approach for GreyNet stage 2.
- Review, and revise as needed, the GreyNet community development strategy
- Initiate and develop partnerships with other 50+ communities: Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE) and Council of the Ageing (COTA)
- Conduct a needs assessment and analysis: identify the needs of the target audience – 50+ through focus group sessions
- Develop a training approach and training materials
- Promote the project to the community – publicise, and develop the community involvement: periodic GreyNet get togethers to facilitate info sharing and support
- Provide introductory training courses on Email, Web Discussion Boards (Forums) and Chat Rooms to 50+ and thus enable people to start ‘communicating across the net’
- Provide people with ongoing facilities and opportunities to practice, socialise and discuss the project, the Internet, their needs and expectations
- Create a GreyNet web site at Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Centre

3.1.1. Instructional priorities

In moving towards implementing the next stage of the GreyNet project the following are seen as critical needs to enabling people to start using the communications tools on the Internet:

- provide people with a context and purpose for on-line communications and virtual communities
- introduce concepts of the on-line communications and virtual communities
- provide people with skills to use the free Email services on the WWW
- provide people with the skills to use Web Discussion Board (Forum) facilities on the WWW
- provide people with the skills to use Java based Chat facilities on the WWW
- provide people with an understanding of the jargon used to communicate on the Internet
- provide people with an understanding of the support infrastructure available to them

3.1.2. Proposed data collection methods

1. Interviews with:

- Representative members of target audience
 - what their knowledge is of on-line communications and virtual communities
 - how they feel about the moves to on-line communications by organisations such the Victorian Government
 - what they feel is needed to participate
 - how they will and are dealing with these changes
 - what their expectations are of the Internet are
 - what knowledge, skills and attitudes they see as required to go on-line
 - knowledge of aged education and specific needs to cater for
- Trainers involved in designing and delivering Internet training to older persons
 - Benefits they see for older persons in using WWW and on-line communications
 - Learning environment they see as critical to success
 - Practical ideas that would contribute to dismantling barriers to older persons participating

2. Literature Research
 - Investigate aged education
 - Investigate research on communication needs of older persons
 - Research publications on use and acceptance of on-line communications
 - Existing training publications and materials
 - Determine trends and approaches
 - Identify useable materials
 - Gain insight into specific needs of population
3. Investigate Victorian Government direction in on-line communications and placing of its services on-line

3.2. Methodology of the needs assessment

The project is about a new innovation to be introduced. It is not a performance problem so there is no benchmark or specification to reflect against. The approach to the assessment was therefore to seek Optimal outcomes and Feelings on the topic. Therefore, in investigating the problem the following methods were used:

Interviews were held with a number of people in the community on how they see the Internet and its communications possibilities. They were asked what they knew of the Internet's communications tools, the use they would make of it, how they perceived others of the 50+ generation would view it and what would motivate them to use it. They were also asked their views on educational needs, facilities, opportunities, and requirements for the 50+. The people interviewed were the ESNLC GreyNet trainer, trainers of older persons and eighteen representative members of the target audience

Reviewed documentation on aged education to determine historical factors of aged education in Australia, the type of approaches used and the basic requirements of the generation. Reviewed publications, newspapers and magazines, about the introduction of the Internet as an emerging technology and its communications tools of Email & Chat. Reviewed documentation outlining approaches to Email & Chat training and several existing training packages. Reviewed publications focussing on older person's needs from Council of the Ageing Australia for the International Year of Older Persons 1999.

Tried and tested a variety of communications tools available on the Internet: Email – Start, Hotmail, Web Boards and Chat: ICQ, MIRC, Javachat etc. This was done to determine usability, suitability, simplicity of use and finally which one to target for the program.

3.3. Goal Statement(s)

The following are seen as the initial instructional goals to be developed for the project.

Internet & On-line Communications

Aim:

At the completion of this course you should be able to describe the Internet's On-line communications facility, what it can be used for and how it could be used in your life.

Instructional Goal(s):

- Given the term Internet On-Line communications describe the concept
- Given the term Internet On-Line communications describe the variety of applications available and their uses.

Email

Aim:

At the completion of this course you should be able to use a Web-based E-mail package: Hotmail, to communicate with others online.

Instructional Goals:

- Given the term Email describe the concept
- Given a list of Email addresses be able to correctly identify those that are in the correct format
- Given the web address for Hotmail (a free Web-based email service) a login name and password, using a Netscape 4.0 browser connected to the Internet, navigate to the service and logon to your account.
- Using Hotmail, compose and successfully send new messages to nominated addresses
- Using Hotmail, access, open and read nominated incoming messages
- Using Hotmail, create new mail folders and move nominated messages between folders as directed
- Given the term on-line address book describe the concept
- Using Hotmail, open the on-line address book and add and delete email addresses as directed
- Demonstrate the correct logout process when asked to exit Hotmail

Web Discussion Boards – Forum

Aim:

At the completion of this course you should be able to use a Web Discussion Board (Forum) to communicate with others online.

Instructional Goals:

- Given the term Web Discussion Board describe the concept
- Given the web address for a Web Discussion Board using a Netscape 4.0 browser connected to the Internet, navigate to the Web Board, read a nominated topic and all of its threaded responses.
- Given a opened Web Discussion Board topic, write a response and post the follow-up to the Web Discussion Board.
- Given an opened Web Discussion Board create a new topic for discussion.

Chat

Aim:

At the completion of this course you should be able to use a Web-based chat package: Javachat, to communicate with others online.

Instructional Goals:

- Given the term Internet Chat describe the concept
- Given the web address for a Chat site, a login name and password, using a Netscape 4.0 browser connected to the Internet, navigate to the Chat service, logon to your account and open and enter a chat room session.
- Given a opened Chat session identify the members in the session, send a message to the chat board introducing yourself and read and respond to replies received from others in the chat session
- Using javachat correctly exit and navigate to another nominated chat room

4. LEARNER ANALYSIS

4.1. Target audience

The 50 years and over who are already using the Internet to ‘surf the net’ are the target audience of this stage of GreyNet. Many of these may have completed formal courses in how to use the WWW while others may have simply picked it up themselves or from family and friends. They will have an array of life experiences and expectations that they bring to the project.

4.2. Proposed Data Gathering Strategy

- Interviews
Interview representative members of the target audience to determine needs.
- Focus Groups
Conduct focus groups with a cross section of the community to identify and gauge types of prospective learners
- Documentation reviews
Investigate and review any materials that reflect trends and approaches to aged education.
- Questionnaires
Have a questionnaire filled out by members at demonstration sessions to determine needs and existing skills and interests

4.3. Parts of Proposed Strategy Actually Implemented

Interviews have been conducted with eighteen members of the target group, trainers who deliver training to the target group and project members. The findings can be found in appendix A. A number of questions were posed to trainers experienced in delivery to the target group. See appendix B.

4.4. Summary of findings of the learner analysis

The audience will come from a wide variety of backgrounds and educational levels. They will bring to the project a vast array of skills and knowledge. There will be a varying level of computer literacy – from little to a lot, a varying level of curiosity about the Internet as well as a varying level of expertise in using the WWW. This group is extremely difficult to create a singular description – we're talking about society in general.

4.4.1. General Characteristics

Age	50+
Sex	Male & Female
Educational Levels	Secondary, Tertiary, Graduate & Post Graduate
Achievement Levels	Vast and varied
Learning Styles	All types
Verbal Abilities	Varied
Relevant Experience	From minimal to expert
Keyboard Skills	Minimal to expert
Attitudes to Subject	Ranges from disinterest to positive and enthusiastic
Perceived Needs	Enough to get on and see what's there
Disabilities	Sight, hearing and environmental aspects
Special needs	Access and comfort

4.5. Recommendations on minimum entry level

Entry to the program will require basic skills of browsing: as detailed in the existing Greynet introductory courses.

Windows 95 and Internet Skills

In a classroom environment, given a Mouse, pad and personal computer operating Windows 95, Netscape 4.0 browser connected to the internet the learner will:

- navigate within the Windows environment and initiate a nominated application, bringing up the application's start-up page/screen
- open, close and resize nominated application windows using a mouse
- use the scroll bar function to navigate up and down an application's window using a mouse
- navigate the toolbar and open and close drop down windows using a mouse
- navigate the toolbar and open drop down windows and initiate a nominated function using a mouse
- recognise a text box on a web page, correctly insert the cursor into it and type nominated text into the text box
- demonstrate highlighting of nominated text within an application using a mouse
- given a Netscape 4.0 browser displaying a web page, name and describe the nominated parts on the browser and page that are used to enter and navigate the WWW
- given a web address (URL) enter it into the Netscape browser and navigate to the nominated web site
- given a topic initiate a search of the WWW using the Yahoo search engine

APPENDIX A - FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS INFO & DATA

Focus Group 1

Q1 Governments and organisations have been busily placing their information and services on-line the WWW

View: How do you feel about this?

- Certain info on the WWW not well developed
- Comprehensiveness of the WWW is unknown
- Cannot wait for the local library to go on-line with its catalogues
- Did not know where to go to find info
- Limited access opportunities
- Concentrating on just browsing – looking for nothing in particular

- *No one had heard much at all about the government directions or what it meant to them*

Stated that Vic Gov. going on-line by 2001

- Concern about reduced contact – need face-to-face
- Consider it a vacuum – life extracting
- It's dehumanising it all
- Out of work force – need to interact – possibly get lonely
- Thoughts on machines replacing people
- Grave concerns about the elimination of people from interaction

Clarified that not everything is going on-line with a bang – it will be gradual

- Feelings that they are making face-to-face difficult to get and do
- Steering people away from f2f
- Minimalise employment
- Saving of dollars is the issue
- Good for busy people – use electronic
- Important to do it in person – you are more part of the process more in control
- Real hesitation was show about paying bills on-line security and certainty of payment
- Confidence issues – how can they be sure
- All considered the paying by phone scenario and indicated that, while some reservations do exist, it is easier – once trust is developed
- Worried about who gets to see the information

Needs what do you feel you need to be able to do to deal with these changes?

- Train yourself to be familiar with it all
- Understand how it really works
- Need to feel comfortable with it all
- need strong info on how PC works
- need to reduce anxieties about computers
- when mistakes are made there's a real need to understand just what is happening
- what is Help - do not understand it or how to use it or get it
- help tools are to tough to use
- to much jargon
- what is needed is easily understood way of getting help

- am confused after listening to kids – to fast
- refreshers needed – process on how to practice more and learn more
- need to raise individual concerns in class
- need face-to-face delivery to address the issues people have – on the spot
- need to have frequent get togethers – talk/share
- need lots of skills to manage the vast amount of knowledge you have to deal with

Q2 The WWW has more people on it and using it in its first five years than the telephone had in its first 30 years

View: Do you know of the many possibilities of communications available on the WWW

View: How do you feel about this new exploding form of communications?

Silence- Had to inform through prompts what is out there

- You can leave feedback
- We do not know now but can learn
- There are things for disabled people – blind, deaf etc

Explained newsgroups

- Is it like bulleting boards
- How do you find them
- Interest groups use them
- How do you find stuff

View: Do you see any benefits in being able to communicate using the WWW?

- Communication in any form is good
- Get your face on the screen
- Chat with organisations/ companies so as to keep employment skills up
- Use the technology but with a human behind it == fall back
- Keep records of conversations
- With the net you have wider ability to communicate across the world
- Learn more about others across the world
- A lack of communications is not good - = conflict
- Having penpals is good
- Reduces isolation
- If hesitant now will probably become more so in a year or so from now – get on board now
- Keep life normal in day – integrate it into night time – helps get you sleepy

Need: What do you feel you need to be able to actively participate in these new ways of communicating?

- Skills to do its all
- Devote time to learning
- Programs that focus on each little part of technology – simple
- Structured modules with plenty of ability to practice
- Concession rates – cost is an issue
- Appropriate training for the people – think about their needs
- Really do need a PC to practice
- Need access to practice
- Need to have regular info sessions to find out what is going on
- Need to learn how to search effectively – to much info

Q3 It seems that to actively participate in today's emerging technologies you practically have to have a degree in computer science?

View: How do you feel about the perceived need to have to know so much?

- You do not have to know it all – many do well enough to use it but do not know the technicals
- This is not an accurate statement
- It frightens many people
- It is getting easier
- Need to read about this IT stuff to learn
- Need to try and keep up with it all
- Glossary of terms help break down barriers
- Language and jargon is a real problem
- Knowledge to get is simply non-stop
- Need a year at it constantly to get on top of it all
- Technology is so quick – it's a 24 hour occupation

View: How do you feel about technology and its part in your life?

- Technology is good in life – it helps
- Found it frightening – was human now a machine does it – better
- Need more leisure and less crap in life
- It is generating more unemployment
- Technology can effect your self esteem – creates issues keeping up
- General concerns about where it is all going

Needs: What do you feel you need to have to be able to deal with today's technology?

- Need to be accepting
- Need to be open minded
- Kids ask the parents to tell history
- Learn what a computer can do – need to be told – need to learn
- Initial need of motivation to acquire information – to learn
- Curiosity is a real need for it all
- Constant information sessions
- Need to keep aware of what is happening in it all – self awareness
- Need you won PC - a must
- Need local access – costs are an issue

Focus Group 2

Q1 Governments and organisations have been busily placing their information and services on-line the WWW

View: How do you feel about this?

- Know nothing beyond press releases (papers and GreyNet info)
- Can you pay accounts?
- Not particularly happy to have to do this
- Can you contact any given department?
- What info would you get from them anyway - what form
- What is the value of the information you get?
- I suppose there would be Centrelink so as to get a job
- Access the AGE advertisements

Briefly outlined what information is online from Gov. and other agencies

- Make life easier
- Be able to do it in five minutes - quick
- Paying over the net raised real security concerns
- The loss of human contact is a real issue
- They are usually not very user friendly
- Easier for some – many will be daunted by it all
- Creates power – a voice – the ability to make changes politically
- It's a mechanism for change
- The real concern is losing social contact
- Need to keep physical contact – extremely important
- Do not want to become a zombie – virtual world of no contact
- Generally discouraged – social aspects are the real concern

Needs what do you feel you need to be able to do to deal with these changes?

- Education is a real priority
- Need to go to where the people are – nursing homes etc
- Get and create interest – create awareness
- Publicity and promotions important
- Need to demystify
- Create a relevance for people
- Need for role models – demonstrations
- More variety of training needed
- The issue is broader than Net – it's technology in general
- Need more grounding in net and technology
- It's an endless information source – how to deal with it
- Needs groups to meet and share
- Real need for keyboarding skills – critical
- The keyboard is a real barrier to many
- Need a computer so as to access and practice
- Must be able to work at your own pace
- Group purchasing needs to be investigated
- If chatting a higher keyboard skills level is needed

Q2 The WWW has more people on it and using it in its first five years than the telephone had in its first 30 years

View: Do you know of the many possibilities of communications available on the WWW

View: How do you feel about this new exploding form of communications?

- Named the following: Email, Chat, Bulletin boards and Newsgroups

Did not know what they were though - explained what forms there are and what they do

- How do you join them and what do they cost?
- Do they cover broad ranging topics?
- What is the use of it all to me?
- You can get medical help - hospitals are using it
- You can get computer help
- Visual is much better than the screen
- The cost is a real issue
- Happy and excited by it all
- Frightened by the change

View: Do you see any benefits in being able to communicate using the WWW?

- Great for the kids to keep in touch
- Do your world trip planning
- A real enabler to socialise and meet via the net
- Not really – it is a time waster
- Have not got enough time to get into it
- Gambling on-line
- It is a cheap way of communicating
- Instantaneous
- You can get info on anything quickly
- Access to a wide range of ideas
- Improve the ability to strengthen the Greynet group
- Balances the powers of people to government
- Timesaving

Need: What do you feel you need to be able to actively participate in these new ways of communicating?

- Assurance on the transaction that it gets there and does so safely – no one sees it
- Information on what it all can do and how its can be used
- How can it save you dollars
- How can you use it to manage your information
- Need to know how to be in charge of information
- Need to know how to recognise Spam and get rid of it

Q3 It seems that to actively participate in today's emerging technologies you practically have to have a degree in computer science?

View: How do you feel about the perceived need to have to know so much?

View: How do you feel about technology and its part in your life?

- It is so simple once you are in it using it
- Got to get over the initial hurdles
- Physical barriers – hardware – what is it?
- Not scared of doing it but what am I doing and what can I do?
- Will not leap out and do it
- It is sad that it is driven by cost
- Must slow technology down – to much
- Should fight to retain face-to-face
- There will always be people who will never participate
- Job loss is an issue – tech takeover
- There are though many new jobs as a result

Needs: What do you feel you need to have to be able to deal with today's technology?

- Education is real priority
- Need real introductory courses – as have been doing
- Need an encoring mind to get into it
- Need to be enticed to use it
- Self motivation is needed
- Computers that are accessible
- Need to keep the handwriting skills
- Physical exercise while doing computers
- A supportive environment is a must
- Agencies to help you more with techno stuff
- Lots of publicity and promotion
- How to apply it as a community tool

Focus Group 3

Q1 Governments and organisations have been busily placing their information and services on-line the WWW

(Not many knew much about the services available – examples were provided and discussion on Victorian Government's statement about services being available on-line by 2001)

- Rate payments
- Services associated with moving house eg. Phone connections/disconnections, gas, electricity, etc
- Payment of fines
- Checking demerit points on licenses
- Registration for 18 year olds
- Requests for birth certificates

View: How do you feel about this?

- Feeling of outrage about discrimination against older persons and people with disabilities who cannot access computers
- Many dislike the lack of one-to-one personal contact
- For people with limited physical ability, technology adds another element too difficult to cope with
- Some of the 50+ will be forced out of the workforce by this technology
- Younger people cope better than older people with such technology
- Experience with phone banking has been very positive for some
- A willingness to learn is an important component to adopting new technology
- There are opportunities for 50+ to expand their knowledge
- The assumption is made that everyone will have access to computers
- Many issues still not addressed or adequately explained
- Questions about security of on-line payments and transactions
- Internet-based facilities more visual than telephone

Need: What do you feel you need to be able to deal with these changes?

- Appropriate hardware and software to access services
- Skills to be acquired through appropriate training and practice
- Crucial to have on-going assistance and support available
- Training delivered at an appropriate pace and at a level to suit older persons
- Awareness by trainers that older people can feel intimidated and frightened, and lack self-confidence with new technology
- Feeling of being involved with a like-minded group. Most friends don't have interest or skills in computers

Q2 The WWW has more people on it and using it in its first 5 years than the telephone had in its first 30

View: Do you know of the many possibilities of communications available on the WWW?

(Some had heard of more than simply email, but mostly unaware of options. Some discussion on types of communication possible. Eg Newsgroups, chat, videoconferencing, etc.)

How do you feel about this new exploding form of communications?

Do you see any benefits in being able to communicate using the WWW?

- Technological aspects of setting up on-line communications can be a barrier
- Newsgroups can be overwhelming. One person disconnected from newsgroups due to unwanted flood of incoming email
- Concerns about anonymity of Internet communications – not knowing who you are really dealing with
- Anxious that young people will not develop sufficient social skills
- Unsure of the impact of the Internet being an unrestricted medium
- Email useful tool increasing interaction with friends and relatives
- Chat has time restraints and problems to overcome
- Email can be read or sent any time of day or night
- Confusion regarding how to “download” or save communications to own computer
- Getting started and learning can be frustrating
- Library staff don’t have time to support users, particularly with Internet technology

Need: What do you feel you need to be able to actively participate in these new ways of communicating?

- Suitable hardware and access to services
- Face to face contact and support on an ongoing basis
- More so than for the WWW it is important to have own PC to effectively get involved in on-line communication
- Lots of practice time – libraries usually too restrictive regarding time available and physically getting there
- More information on who are service providers and how to choose a suitable one
- More technical knowledge on how to set up an Internet connection, what modems to choose, etc
- To keep technical explanations and information separate from hands-on learning
- To offer courses at suitable times and keep sessions to suitable lengths. (No agreement though on what suitable length was – some wanted longer sessions, others not keen on trying to take in too much in one sitting)
- Keep explanations on using communications (the training) simple

Q3 It seems that to actively participate in today’s emerging technologies you practically have to have a degree in computer science.

View: How do you feel about the perceived need to have to know so much?

How do you feel about technology today and its part in your life?

- The amount of knowledge needed seems mind-boggling
- Impression is that there is no room for error
- Some feel it’s a challenge and is exciting
- Experimenting is fun
- Mastering new technology can be rewarding
- The mental effort required is ultimately beneficial
- Can be intimidating at first
- People in this focus group already pre-disposed to learning and find it exciting

Need: What do you feel you need to have and be able to do to deal with today's technologies?

- The right mental outlook and attitude
- Appropriate training materials
- Access to hardware
- Need to take into account the visual abilities of older users
- Training sessions and access times geared to suit users
- The view that the computer is simply a tool
- Web site directories would be very useful
- Important to be able to "keep up" with society

Focus Group 4

Q1 Governments and organisations have been busily placing their information and services on-line the WWW

(Again, not many knew much about the services available – examples were provided and discussion on Victorian Government's statement about services being available on-line by 2001. Details as for group 3)

View: How do you feel about this?

- Is resulting in closures of offices and businesses eg. Credit Unions
- A feeling that if we don't utilise face-to-face services (Post Offices) they will disappear
- Concern about security of paying bills on-line
- Concern about the expectation that they will have to learn new technologies
- Can be hard to locate information and services
- Some currently use Internet to access Government organisations, look at newspapers or follow the elections
- Some already using WWW for family history and genealogy
- Most have used access at local libraries
- Advertisements on radio and TV are usually so quick that there is no time to write down Internet addresses
- Like the idea of less time spent in queues
- Like the flexibility of being able to perform transactions at any time of day. Especially important to those with existing time commitments
- Concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of information

Need: What do you feel you need to be able to deal with these changes?

- On-going access facilities
- On-going support and help
- Training programs designed for older people
- On-line information and help that is "jargon-free"
- A logical progression of instruction and support
- A ready source of useful Internet addresses in the form of a directory
- Could the Greynet site provide useful links to relevant services?

Q2 The WWW has more people on it and using it in its first 5 years than the telephone had in its first 30

View: Do you know of the many possibilities of communications available on the WWW?

(As for first group, some had heard of more than simply email, but mostly unaware of options. Some discussion on types of communication possible. Eg Newsgroups, chat, videoconferencing, etc.)

How do you feel about this new exploding form of communications?

Do you see any benefits in being able to communicate using the WWW?

- Some play bridge on-line with people all over the world
- On-line chats are good for areas of interest but rely on people all being on-line at the same time
- Not much use or experience with newsgroups
- Email very useful and greatly increasing ability to communicate
- No experience with videoconferencing
- Can lead to losing direct contact with people if rely on computers as a substitute
- Often cannot download information to use elsewhere due to restrictions in public access areas
- Kids today may not develop adequate social skills, and do not involve themselves in physical activities such as sports – health aspects
- Interested in the idea of a community website
- Simplicity and informal nature of email encourages its use. More likely to write a short mail than expend the effort in writing and mailing a normal letter
- Impressed with the speed and economy of email
- Have been instances where email has brought families together, encouraging several communications per week where there may have otherwise been none
- Have heard lots about the possibility of “romance on the Internet”

Need: What do you feel you need to be able to actively participate in these new ways of communicating?

- Affordable equipment and access
- Best to be able to work from home so having own system is important
- A means to unravel the maze of trying to choose a service provider – how to find out all the hidden \$
- Instructional material both written and on-line, that is not pitched at “techos”
- Material must be clear and simple for initial sessions but quite happy to work up to more difficult concepts if pacing and sequence is right
- A reason to communicate and “someone on the other end”
- Technical help in configuring an Internet connection. Even those who learn how to use the Internet often cannot create their own connections with ISP

Q3 It seems that to actively participate in today’s emerging technologies you practically have to have a degree in computer science.

View: How do you feel about the perceived need to have to know so much?

How do you feel about technology today and its part in your life?

- Learning about new technologies is a positive thing
- Computers and the Internet provide flexible means to accomplishing tasks
- Internet a great information resource
- Some started buying computer magazines but gave up due to the impression that there was too much to keep up with
- Helps to keep the mind active
- Sometimes the volume of new things to learn can seem overwhelming
- Can be intimidating to those without help and support

Need: What do you feel you need to have and be able to do to deal with today's technologies?

- Own equipment and/or access to public facilities
- Ongoing help and support
- An association or group with the same interests
- Good training materials
- Summary sheets which are easily carried and used as a reference
- More information on techniques for searching the Internet
- Regular practice so skills don't get "rusty"
- The right positive mental attitude and a desire to learn
- A degree of relevance of learning. Ie. To be able to apply the new learning in a positive and beneficial manner

APPENDIX B – TRAINER QUESTIONS

Trainer Response 1:

- 1. In regards to communications over the WWW, do you see any benefits for the older person in using what the WWW has to offer**
 - Learning how to use the internet and communicating on it can remove the sense of the world passing one by, awaken the realisation that it's never too late to learn (which can lead to all sorts of other exciting journeys into new knowledge through other avenues once that confidence is built up), open up a whole new world of information, friendship and pleasure and help them feel more able to communicate with their grandchildren or younger people.
 - I would add, that it could also benefit the rest of society when the stored knowledge of older people is combined with the new knowledge provided on the internet. The longer a person lives, the more experiences and memories they have in the brain. Combining what's already there with new knowledge, can provide a richer mix of ideas and possibilities, even the development of new paradigms which would be literally unimaginable when we are younger and have nothing to relate the new knowledge to.

- 2. In a learning environment what do you see as critically important to enable the older person to attain a program's learning outcomes?**
 - Starting with physical factors such as eyesight and manual dexterity, we need to make sure that materials, icons, fonts, etc. are at a reasonable size to be easily seen. We need to teach the use of the keyboard shortcuts as well as the use of the mouse, to overcome some people's slight tremors of the hand which make using the mouse difficult.
 - Secondly, the use of everyday language with no assumptions of understanding computer jargon, is crucial. But gradually introduce the terminology so that it does become familiar to people, so that they can use it and not feel lost in the mystique of the language.

- 3. What do you see are the major hurdles for older persons in taking on, and actively participating in, today's exploding mix of technology on the WWW?**
 - Probably the major hurdle is the psycho/sociological aspect of society's attitude to the older person and the fact that older people themselves too often take on the belief in their own declining usefulness and skill. (The problem also involves the fact that the new technology has not been part of their everyday life as it has been for younger people who have never known any other way and therefore have no built in fears of the unknown or of their own inadequacy.) Once this socialised belief is overcome by older people and the people teaching them, the physiological problems mentioned in my answer to Question 2, are the main hurdles that need to be dealt with.

- Trevor, you mentioned short term memory loss and the need for repetition. Any person of any age needs repetition for short term memory (electric processes in the brain) to become long term memory (chemical processes in the brain). I have not found this to be a major problem just because the students were older people. Some of them do not absorb and retain as well as others but I have not found it to be a universal phenomenon. We know from research that those people who have kept their minds active and challenged, have developed many new synapses that can be used when others begin to fail or are damaged through injury or disease. Those who have not "used their brains" are more likely to run out of usable channels.
- My understanding from reading and from teaching is that the older person is not so different from the younger person in their learning needs. Learning styles (visual, aural, kinaesthetic) need to be catered for at any age. Teachers have to vary their teaching style to cater for all the learning styles in any given class regardless of age of the student.

4. With the WWW in mind are there any practical ideas you can think of that would contribute to improving the experiences of older persons and start to dismantle some of the barriers society has erected for them?

- I think my answer to this is contained in much that I have already said. As you so rightly say, it is the barriers that society has erected that are mainly the problem. The concept that ALL older people are "different" from younger people. There's nothing wrong with recognising differences (if and when they actually exist), but the problem is in seeing one set of differences as inferior and the other set as superior. In this case, age is inferior, youth is superior. The major barriers I think are psychological/attitudinal.
- We need to raise our expectations of older people and help them raise their expectations of themselves. Remember the "Hawthorn Effect"? To me, that's the basic key.

5. In regards to a person's senses what considerations do you see need to be made in designing a training package for older persons: fonts, colours, practice, support etc...

- One of the key factors in letting older people regain control and feel in control of their learning, is to show them how to change the settings on their computers to suit themselves. How to change the colours so that it suits them for greater legibility, how to change the size of the icons on the toolbar buttons, etc. This could be taught right at the beginning of a course.
- Practice - as we've said before repetition is needed and also using what is learnt in a manner that is useful and meaningful to the participants e.g. writing a letter to a grandchild, setting up a household budget, designing a birthday card, so that learning is not theoretical but has immediate application. This also, as you know, reinforces learning.

- Support - I think it is crucial to retain a relaxed atmosphere and a "this is not too serious" feel about the class. Humour and fun make learning easier as well as enjoyable. They should be part of the process. I play relaxing music in the background to all my classes and try to relate ideas in a humourous, visual or anecdotal way as we know from memory training techniques, that we tend to remember things that are humourous and/or visualised.

Trainer Response 2:

1. In regards to communications over the WWW, do you see any benefits for the older person in using what the WWW has to offer?

- Many older persons have limited access to transport and often are too frail travel more than short distances. The ability to communicate via the Internet removes physical and distance barriers.
- Many older people express a desire to pass on life experiences to a younger generation, but are often hampered by a lack of face to face contact time. Current users have remarked to me how wonderful it has been to talk to younger relatives (eg. "the grand-kids") via email.
- Many retirees, especially those in nursing homes, feel that they are just "waiting to die." A relative of mine died in such circumstances only a few years ago. He began to teach himself computers at the age of 72 and often told me that the mental exercise played an important part in keeping him alert. Tracking the library books at the retirement village, and researching family history made him feel he could contribute something of value, even though he was physically quite frail. He missed the Internet phenomenon by only a couple of years, but would have been an ideal candidate.
- Older people have no less curiosity about the world than people of any age. The information available from the Internet is relevant to all age groups and covers topics that interest all sections of society.
- A lack of opportunities for socialisation sometimes affects those with limited mobility. Also, many younger people tend to assume that just because people are old, they must have lots in common. Nothing could be further from the truth. Use of, and an interest in, the WWW can provide a focal point for activity and discussion just as would any hobby or interest group. The benefits to such a group in basing their activities on the WWW is that much broader range of people can be involved, and on a world-wide basis. There is no need to have to "attend meetings" or meet face to face unless they want to.

2. In a learning environment what do you see as critically important to enable the older person to attain a program's learning outcomes?

- Flexibility to attend as many sessions as it takes. People learn at different rates depending on aptitude, motivation and prior experience. It has been my experience that some will fly through materials and exercises without a hitch, while others are still coming to grips with basic concepts.

- The learning environment must be welcoming and friendly. Most older people will not have been in a formal learning environment for many years, and will feel anxious about their ability to cope with the material or “keep up with the class.”
- The trainer must exhibit patience and sensitivity toward different learning styles and abilities. Each learner should be made to feel that they can proceed at their own pace without dragging the rest of the class back. (At times it can become quite a balancing act for the trainer.)
- Learning outcomes must be clearly explained at the outset. There must be a measurable goal for students to strive toward. Some means of self-assessment is also useful, and it has been my experience that this can be done by allowing them to attempt tasks that reflect the learning outcomes. (eg. compose and send an email)
- Reassurance at the outset of any course, that they cannot damage the equipment they are working with by “pushing the wrong button.” Encouraging learners to experiment and ask questions makes them feel more a part of the learning process than they would when a trainer simply disseminates information and corrects mistakes.
- Often, one structured course is not sufficient to attain all the learning outcomes. There are constant questions about where to go to get help when they get stuck. A need for some form of on-going support is a theme that is repeated in virtually every class.
- The ability to practice skills on a regular basis is fundamental to retaining and reinforcing the learning that has already taken place.
- Training sessions must be of appropriate duration, with breaks as needed or requested. Learning about computers can be very dry unless there is constant opportunity to involve the participants in “hands-on” activities. If there is to be a purely theory component to the material, try not to deliver it all at once; more than about 10 minutes without pushing buttons will be wasted time.
- The most important aspect of any course is the motivation of the learner. They must want to be involved, and while a trainer can try to present the material in a way that gives it relevance, the decision is ultimately up to the learner. I recently had a participant who seemed to be struggling with the material, and was amazed to find that she had given her “homework” to her 8 year-old grand-daughter to complete. I can only wonder why she chose to come along in the first place.

3. What do you see are the major hurdles for older persons in taking on, and actively participating in, today’s exploding mix of technology on the WWW?

- Fear of the unknown is often one of the major initial barriers. Computers are often perceived to be a “young person’s world.”
- Affordable access to equipment and services is a barrier for many. Computer equipment is relatively expensive to those with limited financial means, and the problem is compounded by its short useful working life.
- For those with no access at home, travel to a suitable public access facility may also present a problem.
- Even with applications training available (the Internet, E-mail, Word Processing or Publishing,) computers regularly present problems which are difficult for a newcomer to understand or solve. Indeed, experienced users often cannot solve unexpected or uncommon problems or component failures. Unless the older person has someone to

help them with trouble-shooting, many will never master the art of dealing with these situations. This can lead to discouragement and withdrawal from the activities.

- Older persons who get involved with computers are still in a minority. Most of their friends will not understand what they are doing, or be able to help. In fact, friends or family members who tell them that the idea of learning computers at their age is ridiculous may actively discourage them.
- I have indicated that the motivation to learn must come from them. Before they can develop this motivation, they must be made aware of the potential benefits that the Internet could offer them. Many may never choose to get involved simply because they are unaware that there could be anything “out there” that would be relevant. There is a need for education in this regard.

4. With the WWW in mind, are there any practical ideas you can think of that would contribute to improving the experiences of older persons and start to dismantle some of the barriers society has erected for them?

- Car pooling. Those with transport may be able to help those without, to get to access points or training sessions.
- Examples of older people successfully using the technology need to be promoted. There needs to be a raising of awareness that many have already “taken the leap” and are enjoying themselves.
- A constant theme through all of these questions is the need for some means of continuing support and education. Regular meetings and question-and-answer sessions would ease the fears of many. One of the most frequent comments I hear is “I don’t know if I’ll be able to do it without you standing there to help me.” In the early stages of their learning, a supportive environment, with experienced people around them would be of great benefit.
- There needs to be some form of “presence” on the Internet that they feel at home with. “Portals” are the latest Web trend and some form of site that they could consider their own may prove useful. There are already some very successful examples such as the Third Age, but perhaps we need a means of pointing them to these areas. I think the Greynet links page is a good start, but perhaps needs to be expanded and its profile raised. We need to spell out “here is a page just for you!”
- The ultimate way of improving their experience would be to get them involved as active contributors rather than simply passive participants. E-mail, Forums and Chat will certainly be more interactive than the WWW, but ultimately I think the older persons themselves need to be creating web pages and the like. They need to be seen to be adding value to the Greynet project, guiding and directing it. In this way they will take on “ownership” and feel a pride in their achievements.

5. In regards to a person’s senses, what considerations do you see need to be made in designing a training package for older persons: fonts, colours, practice, support, etc.....

- Materials must be easily readable. This encompasses such aspects as large fonts, plenty of “white space” and a logical progression of ideas and skills.
- Sufficient time is needed to master fundamental skills before requiring them to cope with advanced material. The ability to repeat exercises at a later time in order to increase familiarity and confidence is important. Repetition will aid retention.

- Where possible, materials should be presented in clear and simple terms. Computers are notorious for being cloaked with “jargon” but too much specialist language can raise unnecessary barriers. Include technical terms in a glossary as part of an appendix, but try to keep the bulk of the training material uncomplicated.
- Where computer specific terms (eg. Search Engine, Hard Drive) have to be used in the material, they should be adequately defined and explained the first time they are used.
- Where possible, try to draw analogies with concepts that the learners will understand. (eg. comparing Web Address to phone numbers.) Linking new concepts to existing knowledge aids understanding and retention by providing a useable context.
- Frequently encourage questions and devise ways of checking comprehension. Ask questions of individual group members. These may take the form of revision of what has been covered to that point. Gain their attention, get them involved and ask them to explain things in their own words.
- Allow them to take their own notes, but try to devise training materials so that they don’t need to. Computer-based learning relies heavily on “hands-on” processes. Too much concentration on writing down what is being discussed will result in distraction and frustration.
- Use large clear screen fonts and contrasting colours. For those with poor eyesight, it may even be necessary to change screen resolutions. This can present technical difficulties when designing a web-site, but needs to be borne in mind.
- Use mouse settings that make tasks easier for beginners or those with tremors. Ie. Slow down the double-click speeds and pointer speeds. Make people aware that there is nearly always a keyboard equivalent for an any mouse actions.
- Ensure all participants can see the materials, screens and the datashow or whiteboard if they are being used. Sometimes re-arranging the seating may be required, to minimise the difficulties for the vision or hearing-impaired.
- Above all, make the experience FUN.