Learning with ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries

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The future is many, not one

Source: Bishop (2007)
Digital file available at
www.houstonforesight.org
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Source: Houston Foresight - Bishop, Hines and Romero
ALA’s Center for the Future of Libraries will:

• *Identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve*
• *Promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future*
• *Build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues*

[www.ala.org/libraryofthefuture](http://www.ala.org/libraryofthefuture)
Why are we thinking about trends?

“Trends help us to organize our thinking about changes, giving us a clearer picture of the really important things that are going on. From this awareness often emerges key insights to helping solve practical problems.”

“Being fanatically focused on the changing consumer behaviors across all sectors, not just [libraries] – whether because of digital tools or globalization or other generational factors – rather than what silos are doing talking among themselves, and how that affects [libraries] and [their] future.

The future of [libraries] will be defined by leaders who understand the larger context in which [libraries] operate, not by navel gazing.”
Aging Advances

An aging workforce and population will change the United States and other developed nations, impacting the workplace, government budgets, policy, family life, and more.

Why It Matters

An increasing life expectancy will require adequate retirement policies and savings for all adults. [2] Older workers can continue to work past traditional ages of retirement because of the nature of their work, especially in academia, medical, technical, and professional fields. [3]

An aging population will challenge governments to balance support for pensions and funding for programs that benefit younger generations. [4] Government programs that provide transportation, and infrastructure may be challenged by the increased demands from aging populations of older adults. [5]

Life expectancy—a result of scientific advances, improved health care, and increased education—has increased over the years, the average number of older adults living in a community has increased, the number of working-age adults, especially the elderly, has increased, and education has increased over the past 20 years. [6] While the life expectancy of older adults has increased, it is not as high as the younger generations. [7]

The population of older adults becomes more diverse, more people are living in rural areas, and more people are living in large urban areas. [8] In addition, people are living longer, and the quality of life for improved health care and decreased social benefits programs for Medicare.

As life expectancy increases, individuals are spending more time in retirement. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 20% of the older adults in the United States live to age 80 or older. [9]

Increased time in retirement could result in demand for less-restrictive work environments. [10] As the demand for volunteer work, leisure, or other activities increases, less-restrictive work environments might be needed. [11] In addition, the transition to retirement might not have to be made as abruptly as in the past. [12] The increasing demand for volunteer work, leisure, or other activities is increasing the number of older adults who want to continue working. [13]

Large populations of older adults retiring in place or moving to existing older adult communities will significantly influence the economy as consumers, increasing the demand for goods and services from the food service industry, and even new residents. [14]

Notes and Resources


Income Inequality

President Barack Obama has called income inequality the “defining challenge of our time.” [1] According to the Institute for Public Studies, income inequality refers to the extent to which income is distributed in an uneven manner among a population. [2] Income inequality has been growing markedly for the past 30 years. [3]

How It’s Developing

In 2010, the top 1% of the population had 34% of the accumulated wealth (the top 5% had even more). In the United States, the population was divided into three groups: [4] low income, middle income, and high income. [5] However, the high income group made up a small percentage of the overall population. [6] By 2010, the top 1% had captured more than 50% of income growth, if capital gains are included. [7] In 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [8] By 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [9] By 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [10]

Education, long valued as a key to securing highpaying jobs, is no longer a constant in our society. [11] According to the New England University study, since the recession started in 2008, the highest unemployment rate was 14% for workers with a college degree, while those with only high school education collected $2.5 billion. [12] In addition, education is no longer a guaranteed path to success. [13] However, even with one in three adults with at least a bachelor’s degree received a “majority” (57%) of their income from one source: an employer. [14] In 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [15] By 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [16]

At the same time that education is increasing its importance, it is becoming more expensive and income inequality. The United States is facing an economic crisis, leading to the idea that education is no longer a guaranteed path to success. [17] However, even with one in three adults with at least a bachelor’s degree received at least $2.5 billion from an employer. [18] In 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [19]

Income inequality may be especially important in urban areas. In the past 50 years, the inequality gap has widened. Some cities and towns have seen economic growth, while others have seen economic decline. [20] In 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [21] By 2010, the top 1% of the population accounted for 27% of the overall population. [22]

Notes and Resources


What can we learn by looking at trends?

- The most important thing is to start thinking about trends
- Trends don’t work in isolation
- Every trend can be a library trend
- We don’t have to cover the board
We can be part of a solution – we don’t need to be the whole of the solution.
Can reversing the achievement gap reverse income inequality?
By 2050, 66% of the world’s population is projected to live in urban areas.
Fandom communities can bring together pop culture and STEM to build positive futures.