

# **INTERGEN AT THE LIBRARY: PROGRAMS AND ENGAGEMENT ACROSS AGES**

February 26, 2026

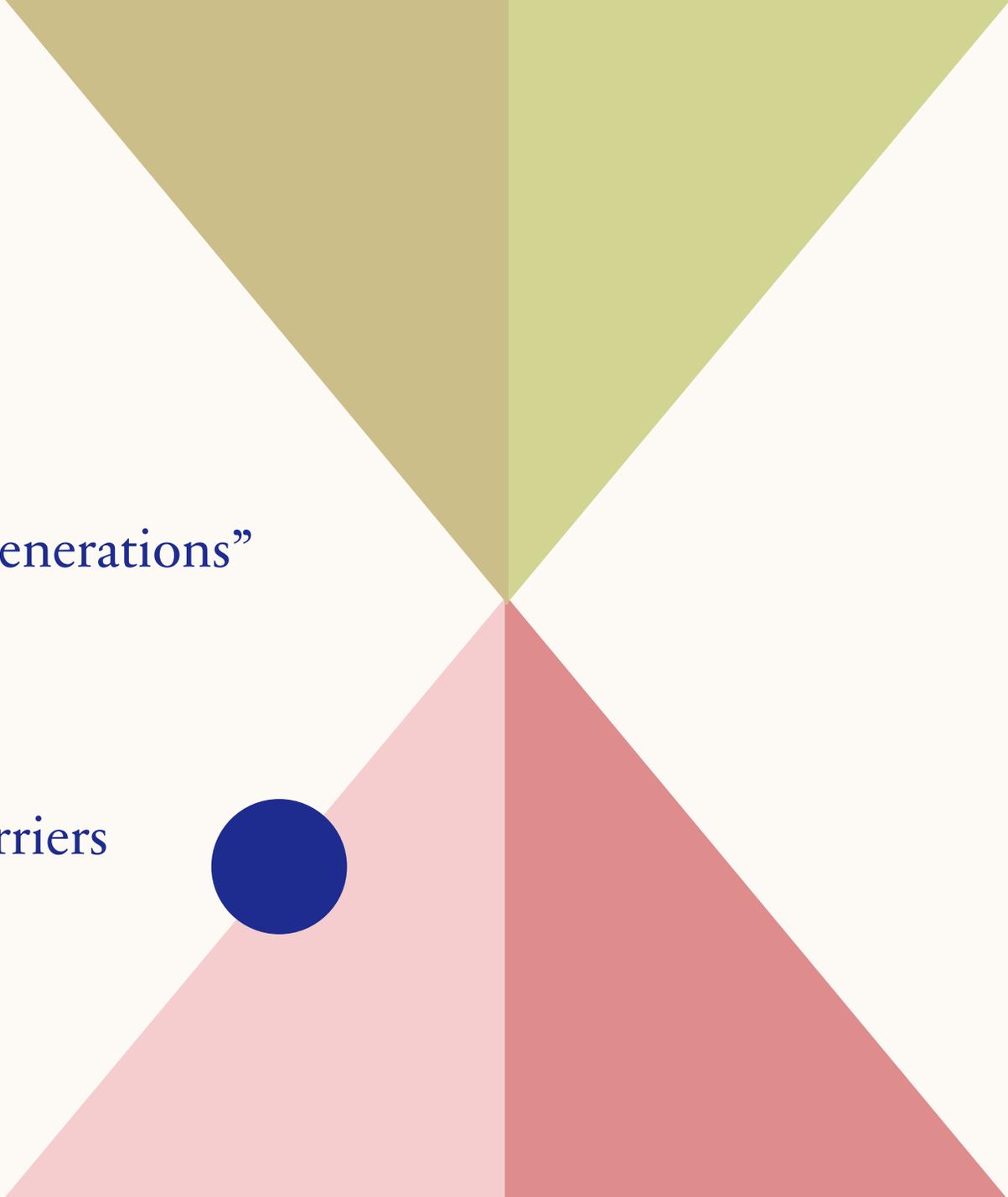
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# **AGENDA**

What we talk about when we talk about “generations”

What is “intergenerational”?

Examples from the Field

Getting Practical: Ideas & Anticipating Barriers

# GENERATIONS

Generation	Baby Boomers ("Boomers")	Generation X ("Gen X-ers")	Millennials	Generation Z "Zoomers"
Birth years	1946 to 1964	1965 to 1980	1981 to 1996	1997 to 2012
~Ages in 2024	60-78	44-59	28-43	12-27
<b>Situational Context</b>  <i>*Coming of age</i>	Cuban Missile Crisis and the JFK assassination  Civil Rights Era Vietnam War  Segregated classrooms >> integrated classrooms	Expansion in technology (microwaves, portable phone)  Increased TV (cable) consumption  Political scandals, AIDS epidemic  --> lack of trust in institutions	Analog childhood, digital adulthood  Entered the workforce hearing that they were often entitled and lazy  Columbine school shooting, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the 2008 recession	First entirely digital native generation  Ever-present gun violence in all previously "safe" spaces, a recession, debates over global warming, the War on Terror, and widespread disease  --> high levels of anxiety and stress at a young age

[Generations Table \(Google Doc\)](#)

# WHAT ARE GENERATIONS?

Beyond birth year, a multiplicity of factors determine one's experience of and identity with "a generation."

## Generations as culture.

Nation of origin/ ethnicity. Religious identity. Migration/ immigration. Urban, rural, etc. environments. Wealth or proximity to wealth. Education levels or types (individual *or* parents). Linguistic characteristics. Popular culture or media. Military household/ family.

# NUMBERS TO KNOW

Demographics shifts and population data overviews – national trends, local trends – can help inform decisions.

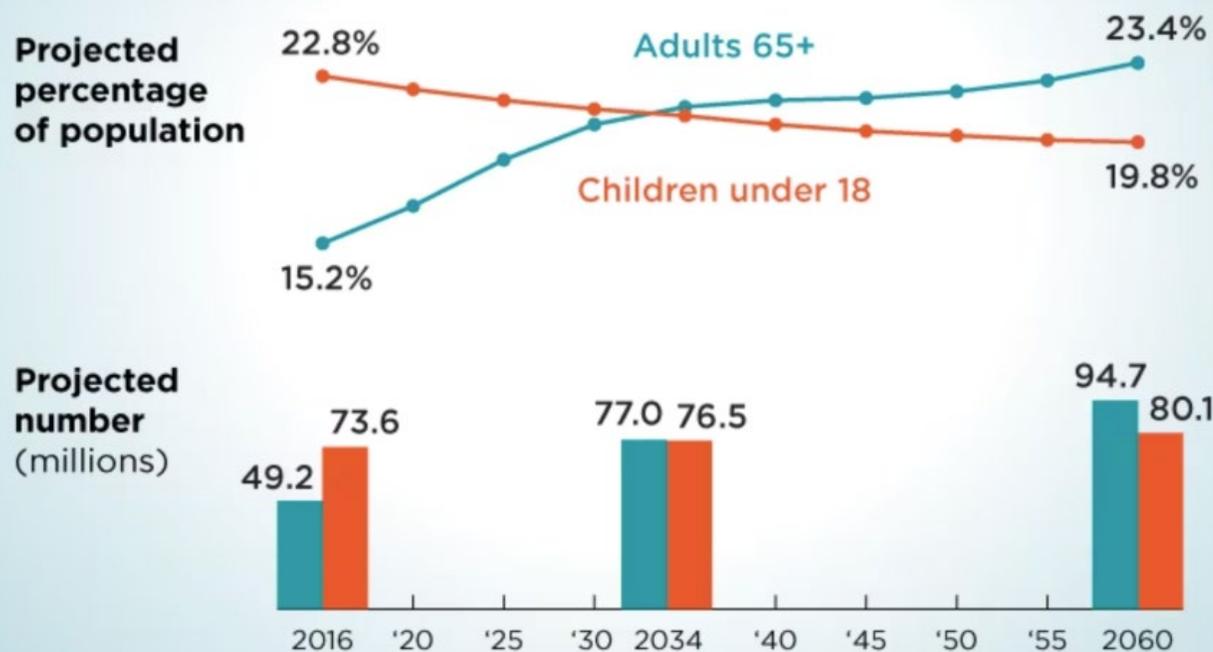
- Who does our library serve most now? Who will our library need to serve *later*?
- What do we spend money and time on now?
- How do population/ age changes suggest a need do change focus? Do they?



## An Aging Nation

Projected Number of Children and Older Adults

For the First Time in U.S. History Older Adults Are Projected to Outnumber Children by 2034



Note: 2016 data are estimates not projections.

# BARRIERS: AGEISM & STEREOTYPES

**Ageism** refers to how we think (**stereotypes**), feel (**prejudice**) and act (**discrimination**) towards others or ourselves based on age

Arise from:

- Perceptions of differences in attitude, values, and work ethic
- Limited experiences with individuals of particular age(s) that become generalized
  - Real life or in media
- Experiences in systems where ageism favors/ disenfranchises one's perceived age
  - Older adults experience higher rates of medical/ healthcare discrimination or mistreatment
  - Teenagers criticized for independence or assertiveness
  - Young adults characterized as “lazy” or “entitled” when underemployed or unable to find work

# WHAT IS “INTERGEN?”

- Intentional
- Transfer of knowledge or experience
- Mutual benefit
- Flattened hierarchy



“Research suggests **diversifying social relationships** to include people who are outside of your group (**bridging social capital**), as well as connections between people of differing power status within the community (**linking social capital**) are also associated with **improved community health and well-being.**”

- Cultivating intergenerational friendships = bridging social capital
- Mentorship exchange between youth and local employers = linking social capital

# Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation

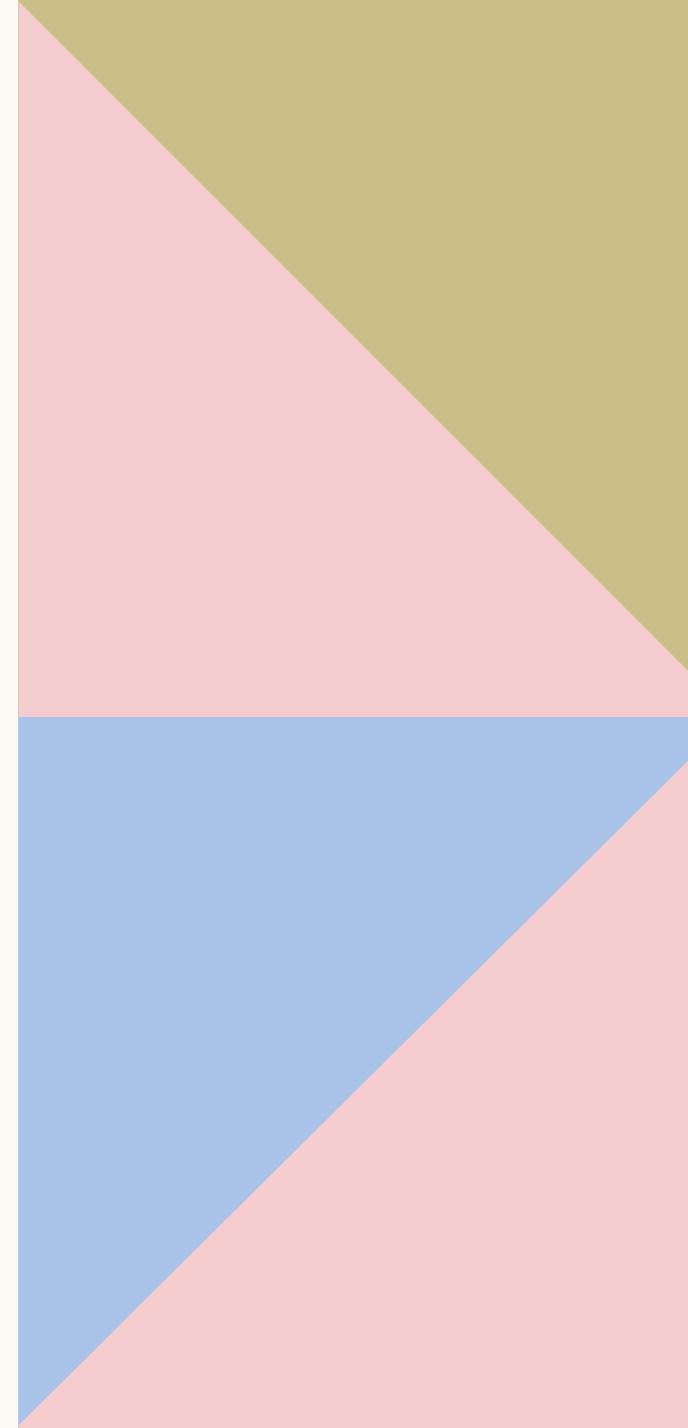


2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community



# **MULTI $\neq$ INTER- GENERATIONAL**



# MULTI-

- Sharing space – may be living situation, working situation
- “All ages”
- Age may determine or imply hierarchy

# INTER-

- Sharing of knowledge
- Bridging social capital
- Not limited to family relations
- Asset/ value not based on age or “seniority”



# **EXAMPLES**



2. NAME THIS MOVIE!



5. WHAT BOOT WAS POPULAR IN THE 1960S?

- A. COWBOY
- B. BEEPOP
- C. RAIN
- D. GO-GO



## BATTLESHIP

### my ships

- Aircraft Carrier  
AAAAA
- Battleship  
BBBBB
- Cruiser  
CCC
- Submarine  
SSS
- Destroyer  
DD

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### enemy ships

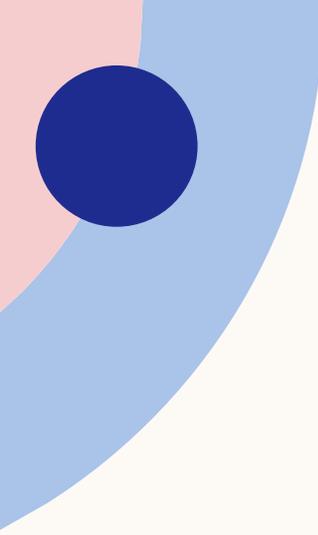
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**THE CORE 4**  
Integrity • Customer Service  
Respect • Professionalism





# **GENERATIONAL SPLIT TRIVIA** (AURORA)

## **LIFE-SIZED BOARD GAMES** (PIKES PEAK LIBRARY DISTRICT)

## **BOARD GAME NIGHT** (BEMIS)

How are they intergen?

- Games & questions from different eras
- Cooperation versus competition of generations
- Encouraged to mix team members with new people
- Cooperative, team gaming inviting teams to form from whoever is present/ attending versus attending as group and competing against another group
- Intentionally curated questions (Generational Split) that require knowledge of different eras of pop culture
- Intentionally curated games from different eras
- Games set up throughout different library spaces or in non-age specific areas

# BOOK CLUB (DURAGNO)



# CLUB DE LECTURA DE CUENTOS CORTOS (DENVER)



How are they intergen?

- Theme/ book centered versus reading level based
- Age agnostic promotion
- Scheduled at time that works for different ages of people
- Non-traditional book clubs
  - Durango Public Library's Book Club includes themes for different months: Queer Magic for June/ Pride, Local Authors, Childhood Favorites, etc.
  - Denver Public Library's Club de lectura de cuentos cortos = "Book club of short stories" feature popcorn-style read aloud and Spanish conversation
- Off-site *and* in-branch
- Community and relationship building between participants as leading outcomes

# SECOND SATURDAY MAKER MEETUP (DELTA)

## WIRE JEWELRY & CROCHET CLUB (ANYTHINK)



How are they intergen?

- Project/ craft centered
- Club/ group regular participants

- Age agnostic calendar listings or craft/ project-centered program
- Both started as intending for a particular age group but drew interest from different age groups
- Regular participants attend, creating a community or group experience



# TALLYN'S TEACHES TAROT (AURORA)

How is it intergen?

- Teen, new adults, and older adults participants
- Group learning
- Everyone brings same level of expertise/ prior knowledge

## Tallyn's Teaches Tarot

—>>><<<—  
1: History



King of Cups: Social Responsibility, Power, Success

### Pictorial Key:

Upright:  
Fair man, man of business, law, or divinity; responsible, disposed to oblige the Querent; also equity, art and science, including those who profess science, law and art; creative intelligence.

Reversed:  
Unfair man; roguery, exaction, extortion, considerable loss.

### Meanings:

...a man of  
...ing to help.



King  
Fish necklace  
Sceptre & Cup  
Throne  
Ship & Dolphin

- Series program: 7 weeks, 1.5 hours per session
- Begins with lecture/ learning from facilitator, then Q&A, discussion, and practice
- Intended for “teens and adults,” actual breakdown: 10% teens, **25% older adults (!!)**, 10% new adults (under 21), rest adults.
- People attending from varied backgrounds, including religious affiliation/ beliefs, professions (e.g., lawyers, medical professionals, science teacher), and genders



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# **GETTING PRACTICAL**

Ideating & Anticipating Barriers

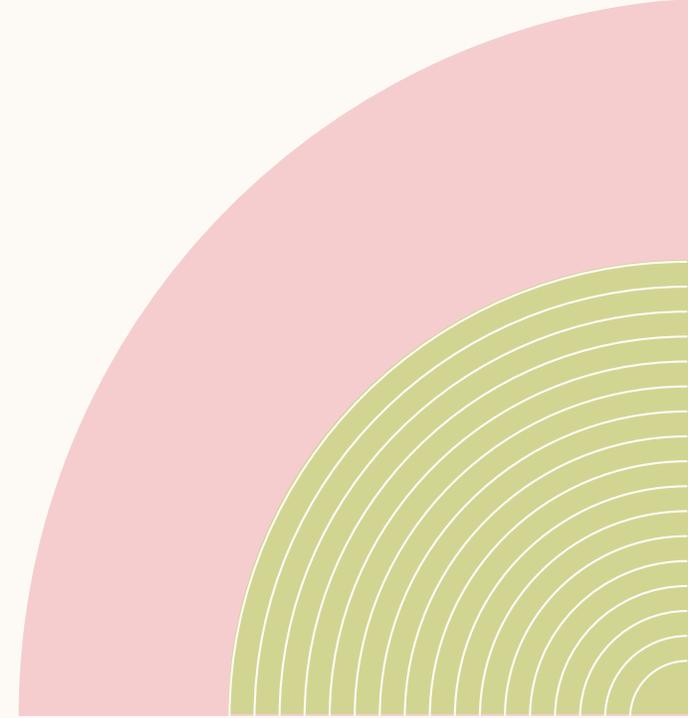
# “WHY” OF INTERGEN PROGRAMMING... LIBRARY

Build capacity by working across age, department, and area silos

Reap the benefits of intergen programming by having an intergen team

Increase interactivity and engagement

– *plus* increase participation, extend inclusion to different cultural definitions of generations and with different lifestyle or living arrangements (e.g., multigen homes)



# “WHY” OF INTERGEN PROGRAMMING... LIBRARY



# IDEATING

- What age groups are you targeting?
- What barriers will arise for each group in attending?
  - Are they surmountable? How?
  - If they are not, how does the goal change?
- What about this program is **inter**generational?
  - Is one group more knowledgeable than the other?
  - What interactions are expected?
  - How will each group benefit from interactions?
- What is your intended outcome? Or, what will you consider *successful*?
- **Is your (library) team intergenerational?**
  - Build capacity across departments or service areas
  - Who is your accomplice/ partner?

# BARRIERS TO INTERGEN PROGRAMMING

“I’m done being around little kids!” ← Grandma

Scheduling for different lifestyles, daily routines, obligations

Start with “intergen” goal end with one age group or “family”/ multigen attendance

Funding disproportionately supports youth programs, including funding for staffing dedicated positions and grants

Divergent or incongruent interests

**“Intergenerational means teenagers and seniors.”**

# FINAL TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

Identify shared or compatible “problems” or needs

- Rise of caregiving teens
- Loneliness epidemic
- Car insurance rates (e.g., teens, older adults)

Consider special event or one-off program (Douglas County Libraries Scavenger Hunt, Pine River Library Zucchini Fest)

Low barrier to entry shared among different generations

- Board games
- No supplies needed
- No special skill required

Age agnostic everything

- Program titles and descriptions
- Tags on event calendars (what does “family” mean)

Schedule for your intended audience

- School schedules (kids)
- Daylight hours (older adults)
- Weekends (working adults, parents)

# THANK YOU

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