

actively even with the obstacles presented by age. Such provocative and productive research deserves to be continued.

REFERENCE

¹Duncan, P. H. and Goggin, W. F. Reading habits, patterns, and interests of older active readers. Paper presented at the Second Annual Meeting of the American Reading Forum, Sarasota, Florida, December 1981.

THE OLDER ACTIVE READER: A COMMENTARY ON DUNCAN AND GOGGIN

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The interview research reported by Duncan and Goggin¹ is both important and interesting. The number of elderly Americans continues to increase and providing for their welfare is a problem which looms larger with each passing year. By applying our knowledge of the reading habits and behaviors of elderly and retired readers, we can take positive steps toward two important ends:

1. We can better predict our own behavior during our retirement years and thus prepare for our own retirement.
2. We can improve the lot of our present senior citizens by making it easier for them to pursue the habit developed from a lifetime of reading.

The finding that all read daily except for the blind person (who therefore listened to "talking books" and hired readers), suggests that retirement villages and nursing homes should have bookstores, book exchanges and/or book mobiles to guarantee that a supply of books remains available to the elderly. And, since nearly all read a newspaper each day and most read magazines regularly, these materials also should be easily accessible (at minimal cost to those on retirement incomes). Since many enjoyed rereading a book read earlier, even during childhood, the book supply should include some of the classic children's books of the time period when the retirees were children.

Since the subjects enjoyed discussing their reading with close friends and with relatives, but usually did not want to participate in organized book discussion groups, it would be appropriate to suggest that friends and relatives first read the books they plan to give or lend to the elderly. By so doing, they can become discussants of the type most preferred by older persons—a relative or close friend.

Difficulties in vision were reported by a number of the interviewees. These can be ameliorated somewhat by providing brither lighting, magnifying glasses, and/or large type books. However, the problem which holding a book presents for the arthritis victim seems much larger to solve. Perhaps computer-controlled text printed on a large screen could provide reading material adjusted to the arthritic reader. Or perhaps microfiche readers could help. As our technology improves, the needs of our older citizens should not be forgotten as we find applications for it.

The finding that the reading patterns of old age were extensions of patterns formed during earlier years is a significant one. Duncan and Goggin cited the case of the mothers who developed the habit of reading late at night because they didn't start until after their children were in bed, pointing out that these women continued to be late-night readers as senior citizens. It would seem that nursing and retirement homes should provide for such reading habits to continue, rather than enforcing sometimes arbitrary routines which conflict with a lifetime reading habit.

In summary, the findings of Duncan and Goggin are sufficient to generate both greater understanding of elderly active readers and some research into ways in which they can pursue reading