

Closing the age divide

Five years ago, Americans ages 46–64 lagged behind younger Americans in their use of most electronic information resources. Today, Boomers’ use of e-mail, search engines, blogs, instant messaging, online bookstores and online news is similar to younger information consumers. Boomers have adopted technologies at accelerating rates since 2005 and are close to eliminating the age-related digital divide.

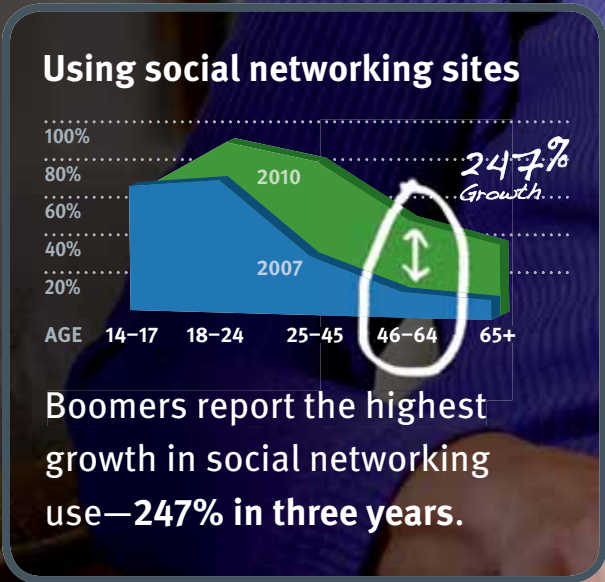
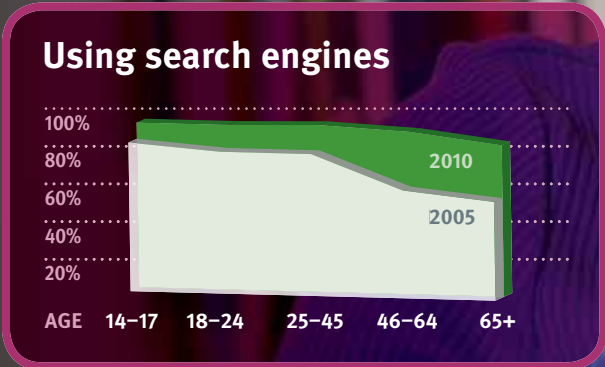
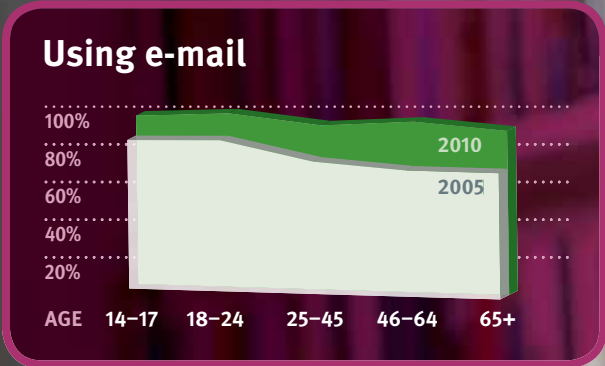
Most Boomers now use e-mail (95%) and search engines (91%). Those using e-mail do so daily (95%) and, among search engine users, more than half search daily (57%).

Boomers report triple-digit growth of social sites

The 46–64-year-old Americans are also quickly gaining ground in the use of social sites. Half are now using social networking (52%) and social media (58%) sites, representing the age group with the highest growth in three years for social networking sites—at 247%. Behind e-mail, search engines and online news sites, social networking sites are Boomers’ most frequently used online sources. Forty-three percent (43%) of Boomers who use social networking sites use them daily—two-thirds use these sites at least weekly. Social media sites gained in popularity. A third (34%) of Boomers who use social media sites use them at least monthly, while the majority use them on an “as-needed” basis (60%).

Getting answers using ask-an-expert sites increased by a triple-digit rate among American Boomers—a similar growth trend seen in all ages. Forty-two percent (42%) of Americans ages 46–64 are now using these sites—a 180% increase in usage from 15% in 2005.

Today, Boomers’ use of e-mail and search engines is similar to that of younger Americans, and Boomers are gaining ground with social networking.



● Five years later, e-mail and search engine use among Americans ages 46–64 closes the age-related digital divide.

A quarter of Boomers are impacted

Boomers were heavily affected by the recent recession. Twenty-three percent (23%) of Boomers experienced a negative change in employment status due to the economic environment. As a result, Boomers indicated significant changes in spending patterns and lifestyle choices. Boomers are the age segment reporting the largest decrease in leisure and recreational spending. Expenditures were significantly reduced on entertainment (65%) and books, CDs and DVDs (53%). They are nearly 50% more likely to have reduced spending on these leisure activities compared to younger Americans.

Like Generation X Americans, Boomers indicated double-digit increases in library use. Seventeen percent (17%) of Boomers increased their library use and the majority did so to save money by borrowing materials rather than purchasing. The vast majority of Boomers who increased their library use are borrowing books, CDs and DVDs more often (91%). Boomers have also increased their use across a broad range of library services, including using the computer (11%), accessing free Internet (21%) and Wi-Fi (11%). American Boomers are also using the library more often for job-related activities, training or educational programs, and seeking college-related information.

Boomers consider themselves to be readers (77%). They are the age group most likely to advise the library to increase customer service (33%)—in particular, to extend hours (18%).

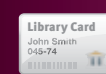
Profile

Boomers (Age 46–64)

23% ARE ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED

77% CONSIDER THEMSELVES A READER

At the library



67%
HAVE A LIBRARY CARD



59%
VISIT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUALLY



22%
HAVE EVER USED THE LIBRARY WEB SITE



23%
ACCESS FREE INTERNET ANNUALLY AT THE LIBRARY



24%
USE A COMPUTER ANNUALLY AT THE LIBRARY



76%
BELIEVE THE LIBRARIAN ADDS VALUE TO SEARCH PROCESS



85%
ARE SATISFIED WITH OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH LIBRARIAN

Boomers: 46- to 64-year-olds

- Reported the largest growth (247%) in social networking use in three years
- Are among the hardest hit by the economy—23% experienced a negative job impact
- Are most likely to have reduced spending on entertainment (65%) and books, CDs and DVDs (53%) due to the economic environment
- Are most likely to consider themselves a reader (77%)
- Are most likely to advise the library to extend hours (18%)

Boomers are using...

95% E-MAIL

91% SEARCH ENGINES

61% WIKIPEDIA

7%
MOBILE DEVICES
TO SEARCH WEB

58%
SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

52%
SOCIAL NETWORKING
SITES

42%
ASK-AN-EXPERT
SITES

Boomers advise libraries

Boomers want libraries to be open more hours.

33% Increase customer service.

18% Extend hours

7% Re-examine rules

6% Add staff/more knowledgeable helpful staff

2% Promote the library/advertise more

“ Advertise Advertise Advertise!!!”

61-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED

“ Stay open! Don’t give in to economic hard times—we need the library!”

50-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED

17% Add or update services.

10% Add/update collection

4% Add/update computers

3% Make services available online

“ Secure more funding for updated books computers internet access community needs etc!”

46-YEAR-OLD COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE

“ I would advise them to buy more DVD’s and make them available.”

46-YEAR-OLD

11% Improve the facility and environment.

9% Renovate/expand facility

1% Study areas/meeting rooms/seating/café

1% Make finding books easier

“ More comfortable furniture.”

55-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED

“ Remodel”

55-YEAR-OLD

“ More parking places ”

60-YEAR-OLD

11% I’m satisfied with my library.

“ Don’t change a thing!!”

61-YEAR-OLD

“ ...EXCELLENT Work!”

49-YEAR-OLD

