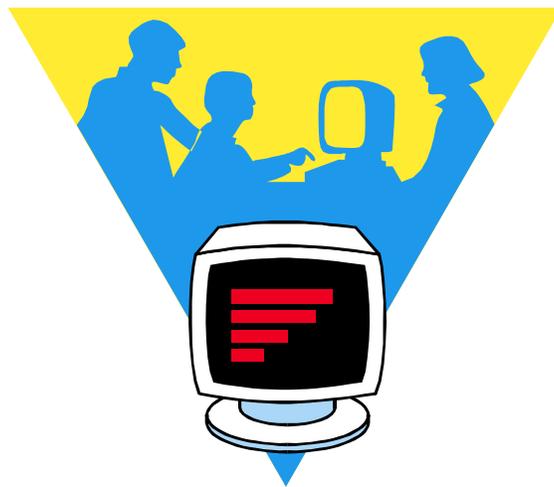# CONNECTIONS
Volunteer Handbook

by Fiona Clark
McGill Centre for Studies in Aging

Connections:
Internet Access for Frail Seniors

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you so much for volunteering. Without you this project would not be possible. The participants rely on your support to help them progress in their computer skills, and your feedback will be a valuable contribution to our research study.

We hope this material will be helpful to you. You will find information about your responsibilities, the site where you are volunteering and who your contacts are. We also include a brief summary of the Connections research study.

Your generosity in offering your time and talents is very much appreciated.

Sincerely

Judes Poirier, Ph. D.,   Fiona Clark, M.A.
Director,   Project Coordinator
McGill Centre for Studies in Aging

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This document includes some excerpts from materials used in a similar project by the Center for the Study of Aging, Duke University Medical Center, Durham, North Carolina

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Connections: Internet Access for Frail Seniors

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to offer older adults with limited mobility the opportunity to use computers and the Internet to access information and communicate with others. Possible benefits to the participants are to enhance their social support, increase self-esteem and their sense of independence, decrease loneliness and social isolation, and improve the public image of seniors.

Evaluation of the impact of this intervention will have the following aims:

A. To examine the feasibility of providing the necessary resources, both human and technical.

B. To see who participates.

C. To determine how much and for what purpose participants use the computers.

D. To examine what psycho-social benefits are experienced by participants.

The project

The Education Task Force of the *McGill Centre for Studies in Aging* has developed this project. The main source of funding is a grant from the Federal Government's *Office of Learning Technologies*.

The computer program will be offered at five locations:
- Griffith McConnell Residence,
- Place Kensington
- Henri Bradet Day Centre of the Centre Hospitalier Richardson,
- The Day Centre of the Jewish Nursing Home,
- St. Margaret's Day Centre.

We anticipate at least 50 participants in all.

Computers will be installed in each location and made available on a regular basis. Volunteer participants will be trained to use the computers for writing (word-processing) and encouraged to use e-mail to correspond with family, grandchildren, friends and former colleagues. They will also be shown how to access the Internet to seek and exchange information related to their interests, hobbies, health care and current events. Each participant's activities will be monitored for a six-month period

Volunteers familiar with computers will be at hand during the study to provide assistance. Students from local high schools and universities, and peer volunteers from seniors' organizations have expressed interest in providing this support on a regular basis.

Evaluation

The study will evaluate the feasibility of offering computers and Internet access in a similar setting. Staff will record the amount of time each participant spends using the computer, as well as various qualitative measures relating to the experiences of participants, volunteers and staff.

There will also be an evaluation of the outcomes. Data will be collected in semi-structured interviews with participants: they will be interviewed at baseline, before computer use begins, and again after six months experience of using the computer. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed to examine what benefits are experienced, and how they are related to the participants' psycho-social well-being.

Dissemination of Results

A reference manual suitable for coordinators of similar senior institutions and their clients, will be printed in both English and French and made available to relevant Canadian organizations and institutions. Reports of the study will be distributed across Canada to seniors' residences and day-care centres, health care professionals, and seniors learning organizations. Findings will also be reported to major providers of computers and network services. Journal articles will be written and the project will be presented at the Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Association on Gerontology.*

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Act as a resource person and helper for the participants with their computer activities.

2. Make sure the participants have an activity to do on the computer, helping them decide what they can do.

3. Control who has access to the Internet – only one of the 2 computers can be on the Internet at any one time.

4. Record in the computer log how each participant used their computer time (what kind of activity: word-processing, surfing the web or e-mail). **This information is important to the study so that we can report on how the computers were used.**

5. In due course answer some questions about your experiences, to add your perceptions to those of the participants and staff. This will be at some point after the participants have used the computers for 6 months (or when you leave the project if that is earlier).

If you are unable to be there:

Please notify us as soon as possible. If we know in advance, we will try and replace you for that session. Let your on-site resource person know (see the last page for the phone number). Also tell the participants in advance if you can, so they will not be disappointed.

If you can no longer volunteer:

If for any reason you are no longer able to continue your volunteer commitment, please notify **Fiona Clark: tel. 487-5127, e-mail: cxfc@musica.mcgill.ca**, as well as your on-site contacts.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The on-site resource person (see last page) will keep you informed of which participants you will be working with. In general there will be a regular schedule, and you will see the same participants each week. If a participant does not show up, or if you have any concerns about their welfare, speak to the resource person.

What are participants learning about computers and the Internet?

During the first nine weeks of the project the participants have had a one-hour lesson each week. The following are the basics we are aiming to teach **or demonstrate**:

GENERAL	Introduction to hardware Use of Mouse – (Practice with Solitaire) Switching on and off The keyboard
WORD	Entering text in WORD Exiting WORD from the <u>F</u>ile menu Editing text The Standard Tool Bar: Print, Preview, Undo Folders and drives Opening and Saving a document Cut, Copy, Paste
INTERNET	Dialing in Internet terminology Searching the Web Windows buttons and scroll bars Internet Toolbar: Favorites, Fonts, History… Signing up for an e-mail list
E-MAIL (HOTMAIL)	Logging in Reading mail Composing and sending a message The address book Hotmail help

The *Connections* computer manual, which was written for the participants, shows the recommended procedures in more detail.
Note: **The exact topics covered will have varied widely between participants, depending on their interests and abilities**. The volunteer's role is to reinforce what each participant has already been shown, give them the opportunity to practice and help them have a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

TIPS FOR HELPING PARTICIPANTS
ON THE COMPUTER

♦ **When you are helping participants, try not to do things for them.** Rather, explain to them how to do whatever it is they asked and, where appropriate, show them where the directions are in the manual.

♦ **Be patient and remain calm**. If a participant sees you get excited and say "The computer crashed!" they are likely to think it was their fault. If the computer freezes as a result of something the participant did, explain this to them calmly.

♦ **Congratulate the participants and be supportive.** Many of the participants need, more than anything, to know they have done something correctly. Please encourage them, even if it is something as small as entering their passwords and usernames correctly –it will make all the difference in the world to them.

♦ **Remember the purpose is not to train computer experts.** Many participants will have trouble remembering from week to week and may never be able to manage completely on their own. The object is to give them access to computers and the internet, and your role is to enable them to do this, helping them produce a document or send an e-mail. If you need to do some of the keying and clicking yourself, that's fine as long as the participant is comfortable with that approach. The level of help necessary is going to be different with each participant.

♦ **Feel free to show them neat computer tricks or cool web-sites.** They will appreciate anything you can add to their computing experience.

♦ **When participants create their own files they should be saved on their own diskette.** This gives them privacy and avoids a confusion of files on the hard drive.

♦ **If participants are stuck for an idea for what to do in WORD you can show them the available exercises.** Printed copies are in the binder with the computer log. The exercises are in the *Exercises* folder on the C: drive**.**

♦ **Participants can prepare e-mail messages in WORD to avoid Internet conflicts.** The prepared message can be moved to the e-mail using CUT and PASTE.

Comments, questions, problems?

Questions and comments related to participants learning or the use and set-up of the computers, should be addressed to **Fiona Clark: tel. 487-5127, e-mail: cxfc@musica.mcgill.ca.** She will be glad to learn of your experiences and to receive suggestions that will contribute to the success of the project.
Note: *Please do not make any changes to the computer settings or install additional software without first checking with Fiona.*

GENERAL TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARTICIPANTS

♦ Identify yourself to any participant you assist.

♦ Many participants have hearing problems – when speaking to them, look them in the face and speak clearly in a normal tone. If you need to, speak louder, but do not shout. (See the next page for further hints for working with the hearing impaired.)

♦ Stand where the participant can see you. Do not make the participant strain to see you.

♦ Be cheerful and friendly to participants.

♦ Address participants as "Mr. Mrs./Ms., etc. Do not use first names unless they request that you do so.

♦ Do not give food or drink to a participant.

♦ Never give medicine under any circumstances. This includes aspirin, Tums, etc.

♦ Do not perform any medical duties! This includes helping a resident to and from their bed and wheelchair – ask for help or permission to do this, if necessary, from a staff person. This is for your own protection as well as the participants.

♦ Timeliness and commitment are important to our participants. If you are not certain that you will be able to keep an appointment with a resident, avoid making that commitment.

♦ Avoid showing alarm at disturbing sights, sounds, or smells.

♦ The participants move much more slowly than you do – try to slow yourself down while you're helping them.

♦ If you need to go to a resident's room, knock before you enter.

HINTS FOR SPEAKING WITH A PARTICIPANT WHO IS HEARING IMPAIRED

♦ Talk at a moderate rate.

♦ Keep your voice at about the same volume throughout, without dropping your voice at the end of each sentence.

♦ Always speak as clearly and accurately as possible. Consonants, especially, should be articulated with care.

♦ Do not over-articulate; mouthing or overdoing articulation is just as bad as mumbling.

♦ Pronounce every name with care. Make a reference to the name for easier understanding, such as: Joan, "the girl from the office" or The Bay, "the downtown store."

♦ Change to a new subject at a slower rate, making sure that the person follows the change. A key word or two at the beginning of a new topic is a good indicator.

♦ Do not attempt to converse while you have something in your mouth. Do not cover your mouth with your hand.

♦ Talk in a normal tone of voice. Shouting does not make your voice more distinct. In some instances, shouting makes it more difficult for hard-of-hearing person to understand.

♦ Address your listener directly. Do not turn away in the middle of a remark or story. Make sure that the listener can see your face easily and that a good light is on it - this helps facilitate lip-reading.

♦ Use longer phrases, which tend to be easier to understand than short ones. For example, "Will you give me a drink of water?" presents much less difficulty than "Will you give me a drink?" Word choice is important here; "fifteen" and "fifty" cents may be confused while a "half dollar" is clearer.

THE HENRI BRADET DAY CENTRE

Mailing Address:	Centre Henri Bradet 6465 Chester Avenue Montréal, QC H4V 2Z8 Fax. 483-4596
Your resource person:	Laura Waugh Tel. 483-1380 loc. 2004
Day Centre Coordinator:	Mona Beck Tel. 483-1380 loc. 2003

Getting there:

By public transportation: Take the **metro to Villa Maria**.
From there take the **103 bus** to the stop before the intersection of Côte St-Luc Road.

Parking if you drive: You may park free in the parking lot, but it is likely there will not be space. There is ample free parking on Chester or other streets nearby.

The Computer Room

The computers are set up in the main Activities Room of the Day Centre.

Signing in:

As well as being a volunteer for the *Connections* Project, you are also a member of the volunteer team at the Julius Richardson Hospital. This is to your advantage because a record will be kept of your volunteer hours and you will be covered for insurance purposes, etc. Please sign in each time you volunteer and follow the guidelines as indicated by the hospital's volunteer coordinator **Karen Kennedy (Tel. 483-1380 loc. 2501).**