

AARP Office of Academic Affairs  
H.R. Moody, Editor

## THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT?

As gerontologists, many of us teach about retirement. Yet when one of our colleagues announces retirement, I sometimes find myself shocked. But, why? I ask myself. A little like a funeral director who is surprised by death? The truth, long known to sociologists beginning with Professor Emeritus Gordon Streib, is that retirement is generally a very happy and positive time of life. (NOTE: I saw Gordon recently in Florida and he seemed happy as ever, living proof of his earlier research findings.)

Is Streib typical of other faculty? Should we be devising more flexible approaches to the process of retirement? Paul Yakoboski, principal research fellow with the TIAA-CREF Institute, has compiled data about faculty job satisfaction related to retirement, and he has found that large percentages of faculty members are open to programs offering phased retirement. Institutions do offer financial incentives for early retirement: I myself took a package like that when I retired from the City University of New York several years ago.

With today's turbulent stock market and rising retirement health costs, planning for the future isn't easy. But gerontologists can console themselves on one point. Where is there another field, other than gerontology, where year after year we get more and more expert about our own subject matter?

For more on "When and Why Professors Retire" visit:

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/11/13/retire>

On faculty retirement trends, see: <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/retirement/2007retsurr/default.htm>

## THE BIG MYTHS ABOUT RETIREMENT

1. MYTH: People today are retiring to move to the Sunbelt.

FACT: Some do, but more than 90% stay right where they've always lived and most of the rest move only within their state of residence.

2. MYTH: People in retirement spend most time on hobbies, travel and being with family.

FACT: The largest item of time use for retired people is watching TV (43 hours per week on average).

3. MYTH: In traditional societies, respect for elders meant giving people a decent retirement.

FACT: Mass retirement was unknown until the 20th century.

4. MYTH: People are retiring earlier than ever.

FACT: Early retirement has been reversing for the past 10 years. It's increasingly a thing of the past.

Remember Mark Twain's quip: "It's not the things we know but the things we know that ain't so that's the problem." (For sources, see AGING: Concepts and Controversies, Sage, 2006).

## THOMAS COLE'S "VOYAGE OF LIFE"

One of the most famous American paintings is "The Voyage of Life: Childhood, Youth, Manhood, Old Age" by Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole's acclaimed four-part series depicts the journey of an archetypal voyager along the "River of Life." The paintings move from the innocence of childhood, to youthful idealism, through the tribulations of midlife, and into a placid sea of old age. The paintings are a great way to offer a visual depiction of life-course development for students. For the opening vision of childhood, visit:

<http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pinfo?Object=52167+0+note>

Are you using visual images in the classroom? In order to share Thomas Cole's paintings with students, just use PowerPoint and go to [Google Images](#) where you can find digitized images available for use in educational settings.

## WEB LITERACY

"I learned it on the Internet." Not necessarily a good response is it? Today's freshman are part of the "Google Generation" but they may not be web literate. That's the conclusion of a new report from the Joint Information Systems Committee, a British higher-education research institute.

-Young people need better training in search strategies to find reliable information. Finding something quickly also requires evaluation of the quality of what is found. -The Internet is a vast "black box." Students don't actually understand what it is.

-Libraries are critical, but library resources need to be more closely tied to Internet search tools.

See also the work of the Pew Internet and American Life Project at:

[https://access.aarp.org/PPF/r/231/,DanaInfo=.awxyCtj2pv2o2zr7O48y+report\\_display.asp](https://access.aarp.org/PPF/r/231/,DanaInfo=.awxyCtj2pv2o2zr7O48y+report_display.asp)

## GLOBAL AGING POLICY JOURNAL

AARP has launched "The Journal," a new bi-annual international publication that addresses health and financial security issues facing a global aging population. The first two editions feature articles by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright; former Denmark Prime Minister and President of the European Socialists Paul Nyrup Rasmussen; and other contributors. The Journal is available online at:

<http://www.aarpinternational.org/thejournal>

To obtain a hard copy or sign up for the distribution list, send an email to [international@aarp.org](mailto:international@aarp.org)

## AGHE Director Is Needed

The Gerontological Society of America, based on Washington, DC, is conducting a search to fill the position of Director for the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), GSA's educational arm. Bachelor's degree required, with a graduate degree preferred and a minimum of 5 years experience in a leadership role. Persons interested should send a cover letter and resume to [kbrown@geron.org](mailto:kbrown@geron.org)

## U@50 VIDEOS

AARP has a new DVD available which features the winning videos from its "U@50" challenge on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com). Almost 70 videos were submitted, mostly from students, who made the short films to convey how they envisioned their lives at age 50. The DVD features the five winning videos, two of which were submitted as part of a class assignment in a psychology and aging course. Faculty may find the DVD useful for generating classroom discussion or for mounting similar video challenges. View the winning videos online at <http://www.youtube.com/uat50>, or for a free copy of the DVD, send your name and mailing address to [academicaffairs@aarp.org](mailto:academicaffairs@aarp.org)

## WEB SITES TO SEE

ENVIRONMENT AND AGING. The Environmental Literacy Council offers an overview of the implications of population aging for the world around us at: <http://www.enviroliteracy.org/article.php/1365.html>

FILMS AND VIDEOS. Look at "Films and Videos to Teach about Aging" by Martha Bonney for solid recommendations and links to other websites for films about aging you can use in the classroom: [http://www.cpr.maxwell.syr.edu/gero\\_ed/film\\_list.htm](http://www.cpr.maxwell.syr.edu/gero_ed/film_list.htm)

BIOLOGY. For resources about teaching the basic biology of aging see: <http://www.senescence.info/gerontology.html>

## BOOKS OF INTEREST

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AGEING SOCIETIES, edited by Miriam Bernard and Thomas Scharf (Policy Press, 2007). For details, see:

[https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product\\_info.php?cPath=10082&products\\_id=1266](https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=10082&products_id=1266)

ENDURING QUESTIONS IN GERONTOLOGY, edited by Debra Sheets, Dana Bradley, and Jon Hendricks (Springer, 2006).

CHALLENGES OF AN AGING SOCIETY: Ethical Dilemmas, Political Issues, edited by Rachel Pruchno & Michael Smyer (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2007)