In her latest book on aging, *Granny @ Work: Aging and New Technology on the Job in America*, Karen Riggs states that “stereotypes are much more facile than reality, and they come from all directions” (p. 194). This comment perfectly describes the main standpoint she takes in her focus on how the aging workforce is forced to deal with inevitable technological change both in and outside of the workplace as well as how aging is viewed by the rest of society. At times she delves deeper still, analyzing how the elderly approach and cope with combinations of age, work, and technology and how they are treated by the media and younger generations. Her arguments battle against bias toward aging workers and the digital divide, stating that governments, academics, organizations, and all generations can “participate in the sort of democratic conversations that are necessary to effect progressive change” (p. 242). The book is presented coherently: the first half offers findings from online interactions and several different interview scenarios; the second half focuses on media portrayals of aging in films, advertisements, and books. Riggs concludes with results from a selection of her own initiatives and experiences.

From a theoretical standpoint, this book enriches the discussion of aging and the meaning of “old,” especially from a labour market perspective. Taking into account gender, race, ethnicity, and social class, Riggs successfully weaves together her examinations of the impacts of technology on the aging (mostly in the United States) through interviews, case study analysis, and content analysis. Her research included studying message boards on aging and work issues and conducting in-person interviews with women working at Harley-Davidson as well as with other “representative” aging women who “demonstrated how deeply embedded experiences of new technologies are in everyday life” (p. 86).

Riggs uses a narrative style to successfully depict older women’s ability to cope with technology. At the same time she analyzes how elders can be the “object of the gaze of others and remain virtually inarticulate about their lived experience” (p. 117). By assessing Hollywood’s portrayal of older people, the type of audience segmentation adopted by magazines that either completely ignore or cater directly to older people as consumers as well as the types of age-related texts available for the elderly to deal with aging, Riggs manages to raise interesting questions pertinent to everyone. Ultimately, the answers appear to be obvious but are only really clarified and brought to the forefront through books such as this one: that is, aging is inevitable, aging does not render people into incapable vegetables, the workforce and following generations can benefit from the experiences of older people, and older people can continue to learn from younger generations as well. Furthermore, she emphasizes that more and more people will be “old” in the coming decades, and society needs to find ways to deal effectively with this phenomenon in a healthy and inclusive manner whereby everyone profits. This is possible, according to Riggs’ book, but will require a greater acceptance of aging, further supportive policies from governments, and a cultural revamp in organizations.

A weakness of this book is its methodological presentation, whereby it is difficult to assess how representative and reliable Riggs’ samples are. Comments such as “[m]any women proudly announced they did not ‘look their age’ ” (p. 52) are vague methodologically speaking, in this case referring to Riggs’ findings from online message boards. Another weakness is the inclusion of quotes both from message boards and from interviews. Although interesting statements are revealed, the selected quotes often seem to interrupt the flow of the text without fully revealing the story of the people who made them and why. In this instance Riggs’ writing style is not quite as smooth as, say, Arlie Hochschild’s and her ability to weave pertinent facts from case studies and interviews into an interesting story. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the supportive materials used does show that these
quotes support Riggs’ overall argument that older workers are often discriminated against—that they are in many cases not given the chance to keep up with technological innovation, and that their valuable insight and contributions are too often ignored.

Interestingly, Riggs states that while even the younger generations have to switch to new technologies with which they have little or no experience, “they approach technology intuitively and are less afraid than their elders of looking foolish when it does not immediately work” (p. 168). This less hesitant attitude Riggs says could and should be easily adopted by an aging workforce. She successfully supports this contention at the end of the book through her description of a daring course she constructed at the University of Wisconsin: students were required not to write papers or exams but rather to work with one elderly person on a 16-week Internet project. The results of this experiment back up Riggs’ arguments better than many of the other methodologies she used. They prove that this higher-education experience could not only bring generations together but could also help them learn from each other through the technologies they use, at times about issues that far exceed the technology itself. This is, perhaps, the most powerful insight gained from this book.

Riggs’ book is both persuasive and informative. Though not recommended as a “light read” for a non-specialist on issues of age, work, and technology, it is a must-read for students and academics who confront these topic areas, whether in sociology, communication, economics, or politics. Her theoretical insights and inclusion of relevant policies, authors, and studies as well as her discussions and recommendations come together fluently. Granny @ Work is clever and well-written. For instance, a witty anecdote is an illustration of her quest for books on aging and work in the management section of a bookstore, where she comes across a clerk who, upon learning of her interest, gives her a “patronizing smile” and then concludes: “You won’t find books about older people there” while steering her toward the Death and Dying section (p. 180). This is a perfect example of Riggs’ ability to convey an important message in a humorous and entertaining way. On the other hand, she could be more cautious with comments such as “For workers who are older or who occupy other threatened positions of status, government has a responsibility for enabling change for the better” (p. 114), since these are slightly exaggerated and unsupported. However, Riggs is obviously passionate about the subject matter and one can almost sense the fun she had writing this book. Definitely readable with many strong features, it represents a good start to unravelling how aging should be better integrated and supported in work and society as a whole.

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