

# Five College Learning in Retirement

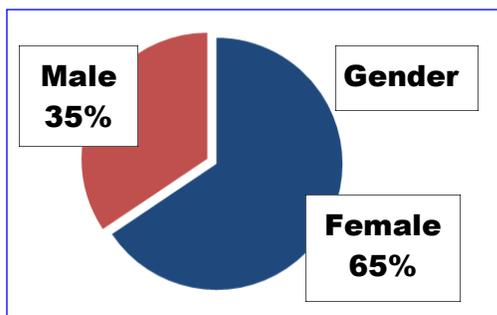
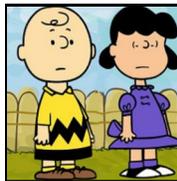
Peer-led Lifelong Learning

Who Are We? - A Special Report (April, 2014)

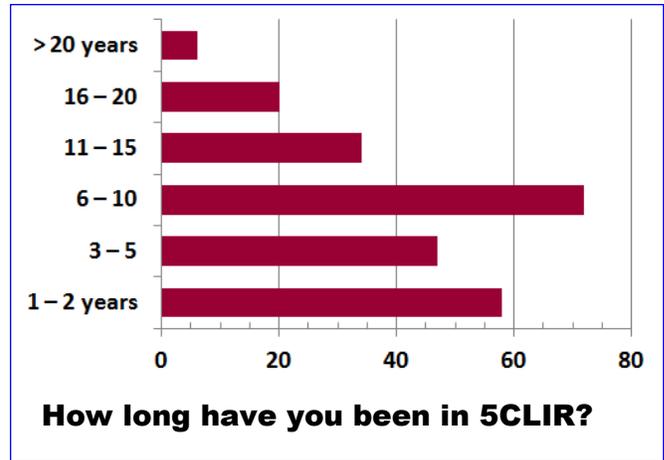
By Chuck Gillies and Hy Edelstein

**5** CLIR was founded in the fall of 1989 with our first peer-led seminars in February, 1990. Hence, we are now in our 25th year. This seemed the right time to up-date our member survey, Who Are We? that we began four years ago. The data should help us as we plan for our future, both financially and programmatically.

**Gender.** It's no surprise that as an organization dedicated to enrichment for retirees a majority of our population is female. However, males are well represented - in fact, according to a recent *New York Times* article - we have a higher percentage of males than attend the Broadway Theater.



**How long have you been in 5CLIR?**  
The median year is 2008, meaning half of our members have been in the organization for at least six years. 25% have been members for more than ten years. Our data show that at least six members have been in the organization for more than twenty years, some since the beginning.



## When did you move to the Valley?

We asked members to remember when they moved to the Valley. 49% have lived in the Valley since before 2000. It appears that we have two over-lapping sub-populations: those who moved here after retirement to be near their alma mater, children or grandchildren, the joys of Happy Valley or for the weather (!) and those who had their careers and raised their children here in the Valley. The graph on the next page shows the results.

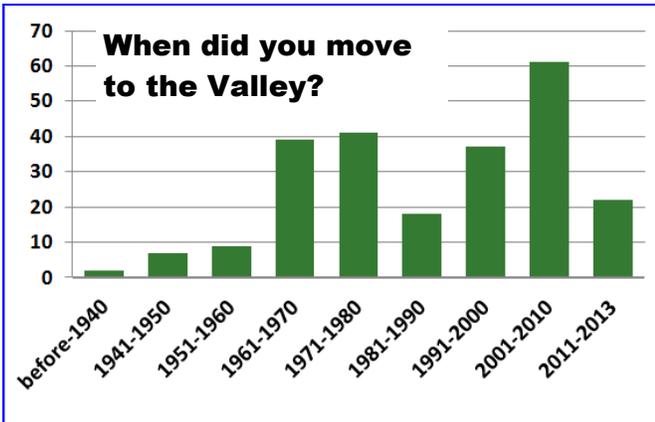


## Five College Learning in Retirement

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**Birth Year and Age**

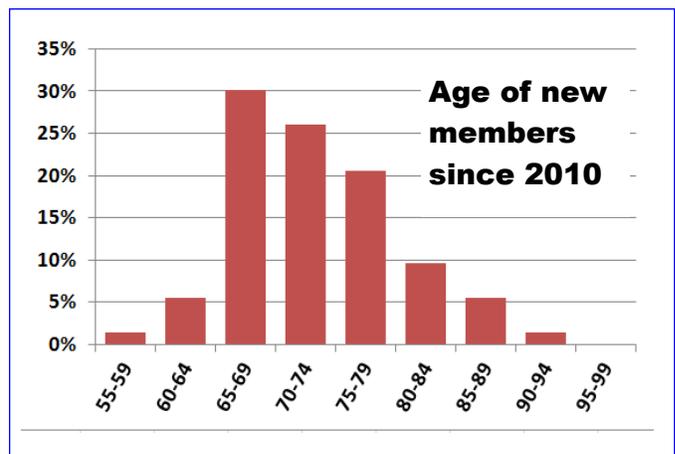
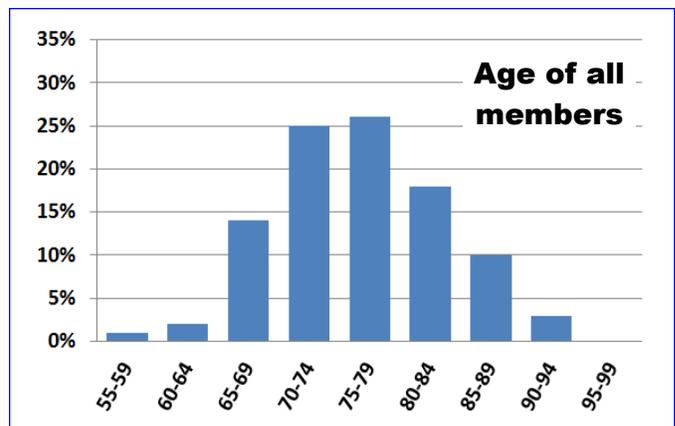
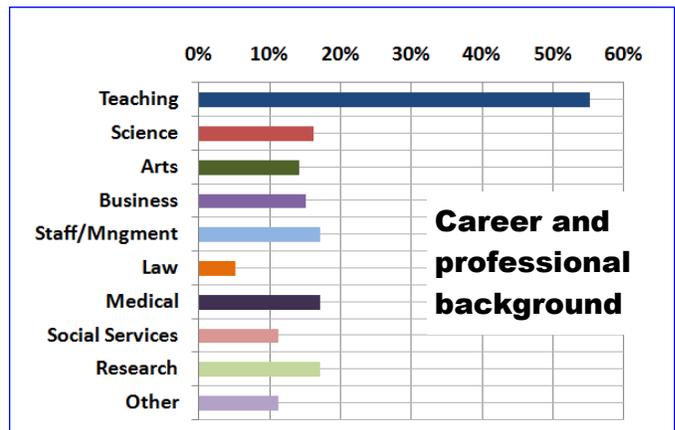
As an organization dedicated to providing active learning venues for retirees with an inevitable exit point it always seemed important to track our age. If we were growing older as a group, the obvious question would be “Who will turn out the lights when the last person leaves?” It turns out that our median age has always been in the 77-78 range, but this year we dropped to a median of 76 because our new members since 2010 have a median age of 72.

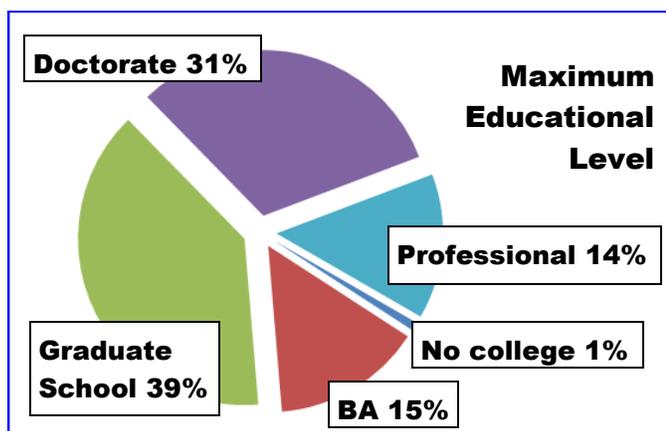
This augurs well for our long term future as newer members take up the burdens and the joys of being moderators of seminars, running special programs and assuming leadership roles on Council and among our officers. Someone once said, “5CLIR is an organization that one can quickly have ownership of”—a double benefit for the organization and for members still feeling the urge and energy to be making a contribution. Seventy-six, if not eighty, is clearly the new fifty!



**What is your career background?**

No surprise that in this educational community over half of our members list “teacher.” But we have a rich mixture of those from arts, business, medicine, law, science, technology, research and social services. Many, of course, had multiple careers. 235 members completed this question. The graph shows the percentage that answered each career listed.





### What is your highest degree?

We are a highly educated bunch, which is to be expected in this five-college area. As in our 2010 report, over 85% have more than a bachelor's degree—which may be intimidating to some—but 5CLIR's philosophy is to be welcoming and supportive of all. Seminars expect the active participation of all participants, but creative and varied approaches are encouraged. Several years ago we created Special Programs to include other activities to appeal to a broader group of members.



### Where do we hold our activities?

As a Five Colleges, Inc. program, from the beginning we have generally held our seminars and other activities in space provided by the five colleges. However, as we have grown we have looked for, and found, other venues to supplement the colleges.

Checking locations for the current term we find the following: Smith College (6), Lathrop Northampton (5), Applewood (4), members homes (4), UMass (2), Lathrop Easthampton (2), Amherst Media (2) and single activities in Amherst College Alumni House, Amherst Woman's Club, Arcadia, Forbes Library, Grace Episcopal Church, Highland Valley Elder Services, Hitchcock Center, Lilly Library, Loomis Community, Mt. Holyoke Willets-Hallowell, National Yiddish Book Center and Rockridge Retirement. Of course, seminars require space for ten weeks and some Special Programs for weekly or monthly space. We greatly appreciate all these venues and are always looking for more (suitable for 10-15 scholars and with reasonable access to parking!).



### What are your connections to the five colleges?

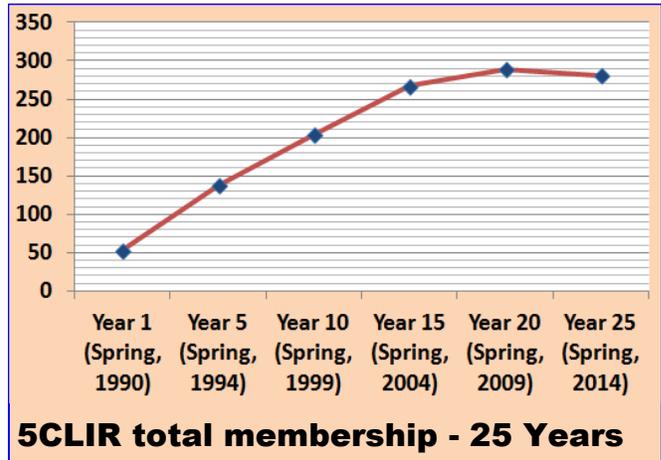
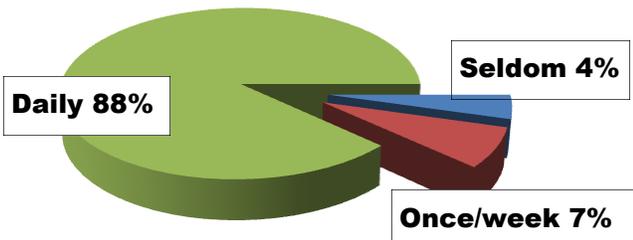
Many of our seminars and other activities take place on the five college campuses. They generously share their libraries, computer facilities and even office space with us. About 50% of our membership (139) have some kind of connection with one or more of the colleges:

College Connections	Alum	Faculty	Staff	Family	Totals
Amherst	7	4	4	8	23
Hampshire	0	3	1	4	8
Mt. Holyoke	5	4	1	4	14
Smith	14	13	3	16	46
UMass	33	27	6	29	95
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>186</b>

**Computer Usage**

When 5CLIR was founded in 1989 very few members had computers or used e-mail regularly. By 2010 we reported that 94% of our members had computers and 85% said they used them daily. In this survey 88% of the members new since 2010 reported they check their e-mail daily. In our next survey we must ask about usage of Facebook, Twitter, smart phones, iPads, tablets, etc.

**How often do you check e-mail?  
(new members only)**



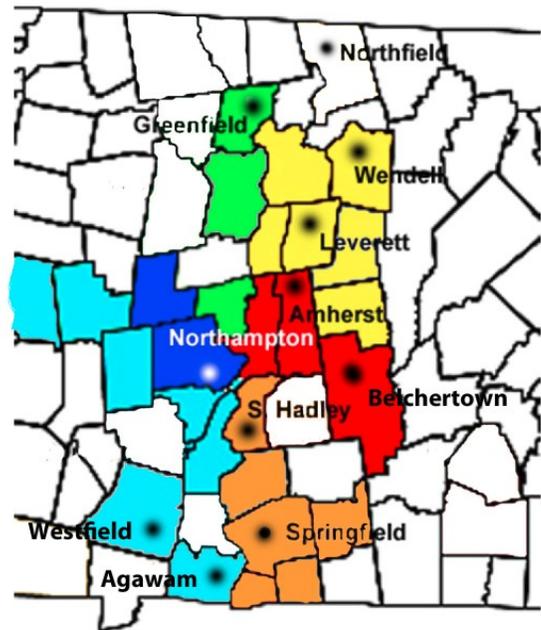
**Our Growth**

In our first term (Fall of 1989) 31 brave souls became 5CLIR’s first participants and Bill Gibson, retired UMass faculty, became our first President. Since then we have grown to almost three hundred members. What is our ideal membership size? Constraints on growth are finding space for our activities and finding volunteers to run them.

**Where do we live?**

We live in 32 towns—almost all in the Pioneer Valley—from Agawam and Longmeadow on the Connecticut border to Greenfield, and from Worthington in the west, to one person out of the Valley in the east in New Braintree. 46% live west of the River, 54% east. 76% live in towns that straddle Route 9, 15% live in towns south of Route 9, 9% live north. Here are the towns with the largest representation:

Amherst	98	Hatfield	5
Northampton	65	Holyoke	4
Florence	18	Haydenville	3
South Hadley	17	Pelham	3
Easthampton	9	Agawam	2
Hadley	8	Greenfield	2
Leverett	7	Longmeadow	2
Williamsburg	7	Montague	2
Leeds	6	Shutesbury	2
Belchertown	5	Westfield	2



**5CLIR and the Pioneer Valley  
(we live in the shaded areas)**