In November 2012, over sixty volunteer coordinators, managers, teachers, and community leaders involved in Adult Basic Education within the state of Minnesota attended the Minnesota Literacy Council’s Volunteer Management Conference. The theme of the conference was “The Changing Face of Volunteerism.” Our featured presenters covered generational differences within the volunteer force, how to engage new generations of volunteers, shifting volunteer expectations and demographics, and incorporating new technology and social media into volunteer programs. Clearly, the changing nature of volunteerism is a hot topic within the field of volunteer management. However, we were curious to know, had the conference attendees actually observed these changes firsthand within their organizations? Do trends in current research reflect what they have personally experienced? To find out, we asked conference attendees to fill out a questionnaire. From their responses, we drew several themes regarding the changing nature of volunteerism and volunteer management in Minnesota’s ABE community.

1. Changing volunteer demographics
   - Volunteer coordinators mentioned a loss of the “traditional” generation of volunteers, and an increase in college student volunteerism.
   - College students are bringing a new energy to the volunteer force.
   - The volunteer base in Minnesota is becoming more diverse overall.

2. Changing volunteer needs and expectations
   - Volunteers are more aware of the need for volunteers within the adult basic education field and the various opportunities available to become involved in this work.
   - Today’s volunteers possess specific skills, strengths, and interests and are eager to incorporate these into their volunteer work.
   - Volunteers are looking for a more “hands-on” experience and the ability to work directly with the population served by an organization.
   - Many of today’s volunteers dedicate less time to a single cause, and are in search of short-term volunteer positions.

3. Evolving roles of organizations and volunteer coordinators
   - Volunteer coordinators are broadening and specifying the definitions and responsibilities of volunteer.
   - Volunteer coordinators have developed the ability to recognize and accommodate a wide range of their volunteers’ skills and interests, including forming personal relationships with volunteers, in order to help them to use their talents effectively within the organization.

4. The influence of technology
   - Volunteer coordinators are learning to integrate new technologies into their jobs such as email contact with volunteers.
   - Computer experience and Digital literacy are highly valued and sought-after skills for potential adult literacy volunteers.

Overall, the trends reported by our survey participants mirrored many of the national trends found in current research that was presented at the Volunteer Management Conference. Shifting demographics, changing volunteer and volunteer coordinator roles, and the influence of technology are indeed changing the face of volunteerism within Minnesota’s Adult Basic Education community.