

## NOTES

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2. Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 18.
3. *Ibid.*, 63.
4. ALA, "Questions and Answers on Labels and Rating Systems." [www.ala.org/ala/issues/advocacy/librarybill/interpretations/faq-labeling.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/issues/advocacy/librarybill/interpretations/faq-labeling.cfm).
5. Donna L. Gilton, "Information Literacy as a Department Store: Applications for Public Teen Librarians," *Young Adult Library Services* 6, no. 2:41.
6. Michael Casey and Michael Stephens, "It's Fine to Drop Dewey," *Library Journal* 134, no. 12:19.
7. ALA, "Tips for Children's and Young Adult Librarians." [www.ala.org/ala/issues/advocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/copingwithchallenges/strategiestips/index.cfm#tipschildrenyoung](http://www.ala.org/ala/issues/advocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/copingwithchallenges/strategiestips/index.cfm#tipschildrenyoung).

## COMPETENCY AREA VII

### Services

THE LIBRARIAN will be able to:

1. Design, implement, and evaluate programs and services within the framework of the library's strategic plan and based on the developmental needs of young adults and the public assets libraries represent, with young adult involvement whenever possible.
2. Identify and plan services with young adults in nontraditional settings, such as hospitals, homeschool settings, alternative education, foster care programs, and detention facilities.
3. Provide a variety of informational and recreational services to meet the diverse needs and interests of young adults and to direct their own personal growth and development.
4. Continually identify trends and pop-culture interests of young people to inform and direct their recreational collection and programming needs.
5. Instruct young adults in basic information gathering, research skills, and information literacy skills—including those necessary to

evaluate and use electronic information sources—to develop lifelong learning habits.

6. Actively involve young adults in planning and implementing services and programs for their age group through advisory boards, task forces, and by less formal means (i.e., surveys, one-on-one discussion, focus groups, etc.).
7. Create an environment that embraces the flexible and changing nature of young adults' entertainment, technological, and informational needs.

The key to providing programs and services for teens is to follow the same ideas we have been exploring throughout this book: consider the library's mission and strategic plan, the YA mission and plan, and the developmental needs of teens, and involve teens in planning and implementing the programs and services. Not all "services" for teens are programs. Services include all the various ways libraries serve teens: collections, reference, readers' advisory, the library's online presence, the physical building and the teen space(s) within it, and outreach services to schools and other places where teens may be found. Programs may be ongoing, like book clubs and volunteer programs; they may be onetime, like author events and gaming tournaments; or they may last for several days or weeks at a time, like summer reading programs, Teen Tech Week, or Teen Read Week.

In a study presented in *Public Libraries* in 2007, Denise Agosto of Drexel College of Information Science and Technology surveyed teens in public libraries in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and asked them, "Why did you come to the library today?" She found that teen library use fell into three major categories: Library as Information Gateway, including information for personal needs and for schoolwork; Library as Social Interaction/Entertainment Space, including interaction with peers and with library staff, and organized as well as unorganized entertainment; and Library as Beneficial Physical Environment, including refuge, personal improvement, and community improvement (volunteering).<sup>1</sup> These findings support the research on positive youth development and developmental assets that we have been using throughout this book.

There are many guides and resources for teen programming, but they are not "one size fits all." Every teen librarian has had the experience of planning for a big program, advertising it to teens, preparing the library staff, and then having two or three or even no teens show up. As with all other programs and services, the best way to get the teens there is to involve them in the

Studio i is Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's (CML's) Blue Screen Animation and Music Production Studio, located on the second floor of ImaginOn in the Loft, CML's teen-only library. In an effort to engage teens in the process of making policies and procedures for the studio, in 2009 teens were invited to bring any questions or concerns about current policies, along with ideas about new ways to encourage patrons to know, understand, and follow guidelines. The hopes were that by incorporating teens in the process, they would feel more ownership in the space and therefore be more likely to respect the rules agreed upon. It was also important to get feedback on the consequences for refusal to follow the policies so that teens would feel the entire process was fair to all users. The current rules and regulations for the studio are very teen-friendly, goal-oriented, and a solid reflection of the teens who use that creative space every day.

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planning process. Find out what kinds of programs your teens want, and get them invested in planning and organizing them. They will then see to it that their friends show up.

Reference services to teens pose a unique challenge. Teens are not children; they are developing critical thinking skills, their reading ability is much the same as that of many adults, and they are developing the ability to hypothesize. They are also not yet adults. They are extremely self-conscious and they become easily embarrassed. They are often reluctant to ask for help, but when they do, "teens approach the reference desk with two main types of questions: the 'imposed' query (usually a school assignment) and the personal query (often a popular culture interest)."<sup>2</sup> The imposed query can be particularly difficult for the reference librarian, because often the teen does not fully understand what the assignment is, and, more important, doesn't really care. But the personal query is often even more difficult, especially if the librarian is not familiar with current trends and popular culture interests.

Consider ways in which you can make the reference transaction easier, both for the teens and for yourself and other library staff. Are there ways you can anticipate the school assignments, and have materials ready to share? If you have made contacts at local schools, as discussed in chapter 3, you will have a source for finding out what the upcoming assignments are.

- Be alert to new assignments as the teens approach you. If you can find a teen who actually has a written copy of the assignment, make a photocopy and keep it at the reference desk.
- Keep an assignment binder and write down the best resources you have found. Add to it as you learn others.
- During the summer, make a list of hot topics that are likely to come up during the school year. Science fairs, literary criticism and author biographies, and U.S. history are perennial favorites. List online and print sources that are appropriate for these topics.
- Create paper and online pathfinders with a few good sources for common assignments.
- Be aware of the current year's national debate topics ([www.nflonline.org/StudentResources/Topics](http://www.nflonline.org/StudentResources/Topics)).
- Be sure all staff members who work at the adult and children's reference desks are aware of your binders, pathfinders, and other resources.

Readers' advisory is another major service that libraries can offer teens, but it can also be a challenge. Teens often want help finding something to read, but are reluctant to ask a librarian. There are numerous resources on readers' advisory for teens, but there is no real substitute for reading the materials that the teens like. Heather Booth points out that "unless teens have interactions to show that librarians can provide a variety of leisure reading options, specifically for their particular interests, our suggestions, just like school assignments, may be viewed as work rather than fun."<sup>3</sup>

- Make a list for yourself of some ways you can identify trends and current pop-culture interests.
- Identify two or three magazines that you can read regularly to help you keep up with the latest celebrities.
- Identify some websites that will help you do the same thing. Add them to your RSS feed aggregator.
- Listen when the teens talk. If necessary, make a note for yourself to look up the topics or people being discussed.

Your library's website is one way that teens will gain access to the library. It should have a separate YA space that focuses on the particular needs and interests of teens. Spend some time looking at the YA pages of several libraries. Include libraries that are about the same size and demographics as yours, as well as some of the better-known and better-funded libraries. Look at

*Library Journal's* "Star Libraries" and the top libraries in Hennen's American Public Library Ratings ([www.haplr-index.com](http://www.haplr-index.com)). Check out their websites and see what they are doing for their teen pages.

A website can be a good way to get information to teens that they are reluctant to ask for, so be sure to include links and information about drugs, sexuality, health, and other social issues. Include phone numbers for hotlines (suicide prevention, drug abuse, etc.) and links to referral and information sites (eating disorders, crisis pregnancy, etc.). Use your contacts with other youth-serving organizations to make sure you are aware of everything your community has to offer.

Identifying and planning services with young adults in nontraditional settings involves first finding out who and where these teens are. The needs assessment process you undertook in chapter 4 should help you with finding this information, as should the contacts with other youth-serving organizations you made in chapter 3. A 2008 article in *Public Libraries* on library service in juvenile detention centers showed a wide range of services offered to this particular group, from an in-house branch of the public library with full services to bookmobile or other book delivery service. Booktalks, discussion groups, author visits, and writing workshops were some of the other services offered in some detention facilities.<sup>4</sup> These are likely the same kinds of programs and services you are offering in the library. Consider which you could offer in nontraditional settings. Set some goals for increasing service to these groups over the next six months, one year, and two years. As discussed in chapter 4, you will need to create a plan and a justification, and include information on the cost of such a project, including personnel costs.

Social networking offers another option for serving teens who are not necessarily in the library. In 2006, YALSA bloggers posted ideas every day for a month about how social networking could be used by teens in positive ways. Connecting specific online tools with the principles of positive youth development, YA librarians talked about ways in which they were using social networking tools in their programs and services in public and school libraries. These blog posts were saved on YALSA's website and are a good starting place for ideas on how to gear new services to the needs of the community. Highlights included ways that social networking can be used to:

- Empower teens
- Give teens the chance to meaningfully serve the community
- Support teen reading and writing/text-based literacy needs and skills

- Give teens opportunities to create and collaborate
- Make sure teens are able to plan and manage projects
- Communicate with community members
- Provide teens with opportunities to choose how to be smart and safe when using technology.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years, gaming has emerged as a significant library service, especially for teens. Julie Scordato of the Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library notes,

The first thing to recognize about American video game culture is that it's not a niche consumer group and hasn't been for a very long time. Playing video and computer games is a normal part of teens' daily media consumption and, in the case of online games, media creation.<sup>6</sup>

She adds, "By providing video game programs to teens, you have an opportunity to build an incredible amount of teen participation in, and identification with, the library." Game programs often include board and card games as well. A list of resources for gaming in the library can be found at Infopeople's website at <http://infopeople.org/resources/gaming>.

Booktalking has long been a staple of YA services. A number of the resources listed at the end of this chapter will give you information on the basics of booktalking. Check out YALSA's resources on booktalking at [www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/profdev/booktalking.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/profdev/booktalking.htm). Bear in mind that there are many different ways to booktalk. If it is difficult for you to schedule time in the schools for booktalking, look for other places you can do it. Concentrate on short "grabbers" that you can share with teens as you are talking with them in the library. As noted in earlier chapters, you can also use your booktalking skill to share teen books with other library staff, with parents, and with community partners. You can booktalk online, using your library's blog or social networking site. Work with your teen advisory group or book discussion group on booktalking tips so they can share books with their friends. Encourage them to share booktalks online, if possible, or offer them a place to share information about their favorite books in the library. (See the "Teen Picks" example on page 73.) Consider gathering lists of good new titles or themed resource lists to send out to teachers or counselors or your community partners once or twice a year, or before special events.

Knowing teens and their interests enables you to create more ways for them to participate. Youth participation in library groups meets several of

A few years ago I worked with the Southeast Massachusetts Regional Library System (SEMLS) on an IMLS project. The project was to develop a website for teens that could act as a one-stop shop for locating information and connecting with each other. The development of the site happened just before the MySpace/Facebook boom and was before lots of the current Web 2.0 technologies were available. That said, the SEMLS administration realized that libraries in their area were not effective in supporting teens via the Web and didn't have the skills to develop websites and web content that met teen technology and informational needs; hence, the grant.

As a part of the project team I worked with teens to develop ideas for the site. Teens were involved in helping to select the Web development firm that was hired to work on the back end and the front end of the site. A few teens sat in on informational meetings with web developers and asked questions of the developers in order to get a sense of how well the professionals would be able to work with the age group. The teens helped to determine what content would be on the site and participated in online chats where they provided information on how they use technology and what they would like to see in a website of this kind from a library. Teens helped come up with the name for the site and also worked to decide what the site would look like. Once the site launched, teens were involved in ongoing maintenance as well as moderated discussion boards on the site.

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the external developmental assets and gives teens an opportunity to develop some of the internal assets, as discussed in chapter 2. Talk to teens at your library, identify an area of interest, and design a club that focuses on that. Book discussion groups are an obvious example, but there may be something else that is more to the liking of your teens. Consider options like a graphic novel group, an anime group, a writing group, a classic film group, a craft group, or a gaming group. Gather a group of interested teens and, along with them, make some decisions about when and how often the group will meet, how meetings will be organized, and so on. Will your book discussion group all read the same book and discuss it, or will it be more of a book-sharing group, where everyone talks about what they have been reading? Are there ways to involve others who don't actually attend the meetings? Perhaps your group members can write reviews that are posted to a library blog or even

on a physical bulletin board. They could create book trailers for posting on YouTube or podcasts about their favorite books.

We all know that teens have much to offer in our schools and communities. By creating programs and services that utilize and showcase the talents and skills of local young adults, libraries give the whole community an opportunity to see teens in a different light.

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## NOTES

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6. Julie Scordato, "Gaming as a Library Service," *Public Libraries* 47, no. 1:67–69.

## STARTING FROM SCRATCH

WHAT IF your library does not have a teen services department, or librarian, or budget? How can you use the competencies to get yourself to where you want to be? No matter where you are, there are almost certainly teens in your service area. If they are part of your service area, your library should be serving them.

You are already reading this book, which is a good place to start. Look at some of the resources listed at the end of each chapter. Join YALSA and look at all of the resources that YALSA has to offer. Decide, based on your current situation, whether your greatest need is to create a separate teen space in the library to house teen collections and activities; to create a separate teen librarian position; or to create a separate teen services budget line for materials, programs, or both. Understand how your library works. What is its organizational structure and how is it funded? What is the budget and how is it divided?

Look at the information on collecting statistics in chapters 1 and 4. Gather data on current YA usage of your library, and develop methods to track YA usage in areas where they don't already exist. Look at what teens are checking out as well as the circulation of YA materials. Observe how teens are using