

REAL-WORLD
TEEN
SERVICES

JENNIFER VELÁSQUEZ



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FOREWORD

I've known and admired Jennifer Velásquez since 2005, the year she “arrived” on the national scene in receiving the *New York Times* Librarian Award. I was subsequently lucky enough to recruit her to teach for us at San José State where she's since taught our introduction to YA services course. And while I know it's impolitic to say something so bold, in this case the observation is relevant: she's engineered the development of a professional YA services department at San Antonio Public Library (SAPL). She's not done it alone, of course, but it's been “Jen's” vision, professionalism, and damn hard work that's raised the profile of SAPL's YA services to national stature.

As the author of *Real-World Teen Services*, Jennifer offers new and seasoned professionals and generalists, as well as administrators, a rare combination of practice-relevant insights gained from years of successful and direct field experience, as well as a store of classroom-tested critical engagement, to provide an updated introduction to contemporary YA services.

Among the insights Jennifer draws upon from serving as an experienced panelist speaker and presenter at associational gatherings is the accurate recognition that many of the constant questions one fields as a presenter of YA services, irrespective of the topic, are questions about “the basics.” The needle never seems to move much. The field never gathers sufficient momentum to move forward, and so seems forever “stuck in first gear,” as I refer to it.

It is my own assessment that this circumstance is the consequence of libraries constantly thrusting librarians and other staff, for many different reasons, into YA service situations insufficiently prepared and supported. Librarians are not supported in taking additional coursework or

evidence-based workshops upon assuming YA services responsibilities. They are not prepared by reading professional literature. They are not supported in making professional connections with senior practitioners or in investigating comparator institutions.

Paraprofessionals frequently find themselves left to their own devices to “cover” YA services. Consequently, when staff does get the opportunity to attend a panel or workshop facilitated by someone of Jennifer’s caliber, they feel they need answers to “basic” questions.

Real-World Teen Services is thus, in part, a remedy to this lingering problem of forever being stuck in first gear.

Among the most significant interventions Jennifer offers in *Real-World Teen Services* is turning to the all-important and much ignored “why” question: Why do libraries serve young adults?

Real-World Teen Services does not recline on what so many books on YA services do in concentrating on the “what” or “how” questions . . . Thus, this is not another book about what specific resources someone feels are important for YAs to read, although it does inform those decisions. It is not another book with “tips” about how to offer popular programs, though it informs these decisions, too.

Instead, *Real-World Teen Services* prepares the reader to argue and advocate more successfully for YA services within the institutional contexts where YA service providers all too often lose. If you can’t successfully argue “why” libraries should professionally and equitably serve young adults then none of the other questions will yield satisfactory answers. And if you can’t successfully argue “why” libraries should professionally and equitably serve young adults how can you expect that others will?

So, what’s Jennifer’s answer to this “why” question? Her answer is quite simple, really, but one libraries have historically exhibited tremendous difficulty in carrying out. Libraries, in Jennifer’s formulation, ought not continue offering services filtered only through the agendas of adults—be they well-intentioned pro-youth community advocates and funders, clinical youth advocates, school officials and teachers, library administrators, or even librarians themselves. Why YA services exist is to serve young adults.

In viewing YA services from what we might call “the bottom-up,” *Real-World Teen Services* thus strives to update YA services to where much of the rest of our LIS field is increasingly going—focusing on user

experience rather than continuing to serve institutional assumptions, prerogatives, and priorities. One of our most respected LIS historians, Wayne Wiegand, is about to take this very same “bottom-up” approach in his comprehensive historical treatment, *“Part of Our Lives:” A People’s History of the American Public Library* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press). Thus, it increasingly matters less how many titles a library counts on its shelves, how many computers it says it offers, how many library cards it issues or books it circulates, or even how many youth sign up for or attend programs.

Nor does *Real-World Teen Services* argue that it’s always important to justify YA library service based on discrete “skill development” or antiquated “youth development” models freighted, as they are, with their cultural imperatives to incessantly drive youth toward some idealized “adulthood.” In this new formulation libraries must offer YA services because they serve the needs and desires of young adult users right now and in the present and fleeting moment known as youth. Noted educational critic Jonathan Kozol says it best when he observed that youth “is not merely basic training for utilitarian adulthood. It should have some claims upon our mercy, not for its future value to the economic interests of competitive societies, but for its present value as a perishable piece of life itself” (Kozol 2005).

Once this “why” question is addressed, as Jennifer does in *Real-World Teen Services*, the other questions can come more profitably into play for service providers, practitioners, and administrators: What are the best practices for serving YAs meanings about their library experiences? How to best deliver those services? What criteria ought libraries use to evaluate and improve them over time?

Without our institution’s firm grasp on the *why* question, however, the rest of the library’s YA response is, as Jennifer puts it, just “floating in uncharted waters” or, as I put it, “stuck in first gear.”

Thus, more than any other recent book in YA services literature, Jennifer begins to invert the prevailing and conventional focus on the institutional or adultist agendas about “youth development,” about “youth-at-risk,” curriculum or skill development, or any number of ever-present moral panic discourses about young people. Instead, this book dedicates itself to focusing library work on the actual end user—user meanings, user desires, user experiences. Jennifer distills this approach into three simple words: “always trust teens.”

This is not an easy thing to do in an area of library and information science so dramatically lacking in grounded research as YA services. It is not an easy thing to face down historically driven adult agendas that envision libraries as a means to “improve” young people, to help “keep them off the streets,” or help them “become adults.” It’s especially difficult to push back on these imposed agendas when the field languishes in first gear, without evidence, about what even constitutes best practices; a field always needing to ask questions about “the basics.”

Ultimately this book argues that you’re not really “welcoming” people into a service if all of the experiences and meanings have been predetermined by someone else.

On the other hand, without asking such an important question as “why,” YA service providers will never be able to get into second gear to drive the work forward.

So, read *Real-World Teen Services* to gain this important perspective on current YA services as it applies directly to some “basic” practices such as YA spaces, programming, staffing, and the implications of library rules. Then see for yourself how this increasingly potent focus on the end-user can get your own view of YA services out of first and into second gear.

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Oakland, California

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REFERENCE

Kozol, Jonathan. 2005. “Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid.” *Harper’s Magazine* 311 (September 1).

PREFACE

A few years ago, I did a presentation at the ALA Annual Conference about teens' mobile technology usage patterns and their implications for libraries. It was specific, and—I believed—thought-provoking stuff. When the allotted question period arrived, librarians from around the country began to ask basic questions about basic teen library services and situations. It wasn't the first time that the topic at hand was pushed aside by a hunger to talk about “the basics.”

When I began my journey as a teen services librarian in the late 1990s, I was in seemingly uncharted waters. My first task was to cobble together “teen services” out of good intentions and dust.

I found few resources beyond lists of YA fiction books and litanies of “cool” teen programming ideas. By trial, error (read: epic failures), and instinct, things came together. Some twenty years later, I'm left with one unshakable belief about teen library services: always trust teens. Always. Relevance and success mean being truly open to teens' ideas and desires about their library experience. It's not that your ideas are bad—they are just *your* ideas and this isn't about you or your ideas or what you think a library should be. This is about teens—as partners, producers, and participants.

In this book, I've endeavored to use real-world examples to address the challenges universally faced by teen services library people. The use of the term *real-world* in the book's title acknowledges the need for better calibration of library practitioners' expectations regarding teen services. It is also a call to reframe the established service hierarchy from one that depends on adult mediation to one that relies on activation of library services by the teen end user.

My inspiration came from questions I've consistently received over the years from teen services people and the students in my introduction to YA services course at San José State University's iSchool. I try to address those questions—and to pose some new ones. The book encourages practitioners and LIS students to place an understanding of the teen end user first among the characteristics of a successful teen services professional. It is vital that teen services professionals support each other to reach this crucial shift in service attitude. To encourage this, in the final chapter of this book you will hear the unique service perspectives of two of my former students, as well as a former colleague at the San Antonio Public Library System.

Serving as both a practitioner and an academic has allowed me to view teen services with two sets of eyes: as a librarian/manager/administrator involved in the day-to-day operations of teen services in a large urban library setting, and as an academic who examines teen services issues, asks questions, identifies patterns and problems, and seeks solutions.

I hope you find this book helpful and that it frames fresh ways of thinking about teens, libraries, and our role as teen services librarians—the lone wolves, the magicians tasked with producing miracles out of good intentions and dust.

I hope to hear from you so that this conversation may continue.

Jennifer Velásquez

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INTRODUCTION

Contradictions and Complexity

Twenty-First-Century Teens
in a Nineteenth-Century Library

The traditional structure of the library is at odds with the ways teens want to use public space: discover, share, and create information and interact with their peers, community, and adults.

Habitually perpetuating and imposing the conventions of the nineteenth-century library on twenty-first-century teens is a prescription for failure. Teens, whose intentions with information are at once traditional, complex, and completely new, come to the library with a unique set of expectations. A library's rules, policies, spaces, atmosphere, and procedures can undermine the possibilities the library has to offer.

The Public Library Data Services Report (www.ala.org/pla/publications/plds) publishes the results of the Public Library Association's survey of North American libraries. This data reveals that full-time staffing for teens has decreased just as many libraries are moving forward with high-profile initiatives targeted to teen users (YALSA 2013). Many teen services librarians function alone in their organization, and can experience isolation because of organizational structure or the often low social status of their service group.

Teen services librarians often need to explain who they are, what they do, and what the library has to offer to this audience. The purpose of this book is to help current and future teen services librarians grasp the *why*, even as they work in a service landscape that focuses on *what* and *how*.

A recurring theme in the book is instinct versus articulation. Although teen services people may know and understand issues on an instinctive level, they must be prepared to articulate these ideas in the face of threats to teen service.

This book begins with an examination of the physical space libraries dedicate to teens. The first chapter deals with how to make the most of the limited square footage available in many libraries. It deals with concepts of the physical space of the library as it relates to teens by presenting big picture space models that can be scaled to fit large or small teen spaces. Included is a look at the meaning of space in public buildings and the manner in which libraries rely on imitation rather than research in the development of spaces for teens. It contains a brief examination of participatory culture theory and affinity space and includes an examination of the Danish Four-Space Model.

Chapter 1 also looks at common pitfalls that occur when activating a teen library space and suggests remedies. It reviews the reasons to make these spaces “teens only,” and discusses common concerns such as restrictions and staffing. The chapter explains why teen participation is the ideal driver for the development of teen space. It concludes with a real-world section offering strategies for beginning the process of claiming teen space using the shelving of the YA collection.

Chapter 2 looks at programming for teens and asks why teens often don’t attend these library programs. The teen services librarian needs to articulate how teen programming fits into broader library and teen services contexts. The chapter discusses common organizational barriers to teen programming, including the library’s physical layout and resistance from colleagues and administration. It urges teen services librarians to examine how their own expectations and preconceptions may be a barrier to effective teen programming.

Suggestions to help teen services librarians move from an inward-facing siloed process to one that shifts the librarians’ roles from creators to facilitators of teen participation in the development and implementation of teen programming for themselves and their peers. The chapter proposes a number of forms that teen programming can take.

Chapter 3 illustrates why it is vital for teen services librarians to help all members of library staff learn how to serve teens effectively, and why crafting a positive image of teen services in the organization is paramount. The chapter proposes methods whereby teen services librarians can model outstanding teen service strategies for colleagues, and describes how to create a readers’ advisory strategy that does not fetishize the book or author. It also suggests that organizations intentionally staff for service

to teens rather than rely on serendipity of staff interests related to teen services.

Chapter 4 focuses on the development and application of rules by library staff, and overviews strategies for managing problem behavior from both teens and staff members. It offers suggestions for advocacy when formulating and applying library rules, discusses the inherent problems that occur when there are separate sets of rules for different populations or library spaces, and describes how the rules are best communicated to teen patrons. The chapter ends with suggestions about when to involve authorities and about the importance of maintaining a professional tone in even the most trying situations.

In contrast to chapter 4's discussion of how a library articulates behavioral expectations (i.e., how the library expects users to act), chapter 5 deals with the access and control issues that a library's policies and procedures imposes on patrons (i.e., how the library treats its users), and the implications these limitations may have on teen patron privacy. The chapter treats the subjects of truancy, restrictions on when teens can use the library and what activities are allowed, and situations that may arise when teens volunteer information about serious personal situations to library staff.

In chapter 6, the book closes with a question-and-answer section that considers common but often overlooked teen services issues, and includes responses from practicing teen services professionals. Topics range from "What do you do when teen patrons want to say hello by hugging you?" to "What are some strategies for effective teen services when you are the only teen services librarian in the library system tasked with serving all the teens?"

The primary audience for this book is teen services librarians and library science students studying teen services. Generalists who wish to gain some insight into teen services can use it and, for administrators in particular, it offers a tableau of the real-world challenges that may be invisible to management in the library setting.

The book describes real-world tactics that can be applied in a variety of service situations, and addresses a variety of challenges and threats to teen services. Each chapter closes with a Soap Box Moment that offers unfiltered advice for practitioners or food for thought for future teen services librarians.

The goal of this book is to address issues and challenges that are seldom discussed in the professional literature; to offer practical advice, strategies, and tactics grounded in experience and best practices that will improve service to teens; and to reframe and advance the way teen services librarians and their colleagues approach teen end users and teen library services.

REFERENCE

Young Adult Library Services Association. 2013. Board of Directors Meeting Minutes. ALA Midwinter Meeting, January 25 – 29. www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/Administrators_MW13.pdf.

TEEN LIBRARY SPACE

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- How does the library space foster opportunities for authentic teen participation and ownership of the library experience?
- How and to what degree can teens control and shape their physical environment in the library?
- How can teen participation be ongoing and sustainable, and how can physical space foster this process?
- How can physical space be adjusted to accommodate the evolving interests and activities teens want to engage in?

A Dedicated Teen Space

Cultivating a space in the library that teens can activate and own sends teens a strong signal they are valued and welcome in the library. Making the case to managers for a dedicated teen space may be challenging, particularly in library locations where space is at a premium, the idea of teens congregating is problematic, or competition for resources is fierce.

Teens (defined here as those ages thirteen to eighteen) are usually scrutinized closely because of expectations that they will cause trouble. They are often held to different behavioral expectations than other patrons—a group of toddlers or genealogists will be greeted with smiles

and nods, but a group of exuberant teens is likely to get thrown out. This may cause managers to view dedicated teen space as a means to segregate teens from the general population.

On an instinctive level, teen services librarians may know that it is important to provide teens with dedicated space in the library. As their advocates, teen services librarians must be able to:

- articulate why a dedicated teen space is important
- make a case for teen space to managers, coworkers, and community members
- express how space is a link to effective and efficient services, programming, and overall service equality

The form this message takes is crucial. Managers may be more receptive to an established, documented rationale from outside of the organization. Such a rationale may provide weight to a space request/justification for teens.

In addition to offering a rationale for teen space, examining proven space models—even if they are not related specifically to teen space—may offer teen services librarians fresh perspectives and reveal new possibilities for the use of space to fulfill overall service goals for teens. This can also help to change the habitual, imitative patterns of teen space development perpetuated in current practice.

Teen services librarians should not focus on the physical features of a teen space, but rather on the service reasons behind why the library should offer dedicated space to teens. They should consider how teen space is developed; how library space models can be applied to craft space for teen users; and what their implications are for teen services.

The Meaning of Space

Space is power. The allotment of space in public buildings clearly illustrates which groups matter and which groups don't. In Anthony Bernier's groundbreaking research on teen library spaces, he notes that although many library systems recognize the need for dedicated space for teens, there is very little research on YA spaces in public libraries, despite growing interest in the topic over the last dozen years (Bernier 2013). Attention has focused on how teen spaces look and the features

they include. However, without adequate grounding in research, the construction of new spaces and remodels of existing spaces often do not take into account the unique needs of teens, the way they desire to use and naturally use space.

Because there is so little research, architects, designers, and librarians often select design elements for teen spaces without any basis in best practices. This reliance on untested models can result in design echo chambers where libraries copy features from each other without considering functionality or the specific needs and behaviors of the user group. The resulting spaces are often stages for conflict, which place teens engaging in normal usage behavior in environments that simply don't work for their normal—and appropriate—needs or habits. Bernier describes this phenomenon as the “Geography of No!,” where libraries enforce regulations and create spaces that force teens into behaviors and environments that directly contradict how young people actually work and use space (Bernier 2003).

Designing teen spaces isn't about tables, chairs, and trendy lounge seating; it's about intention and usefulness. Because there are no best practices, practitioners must rely on common practice. If there is no clear vision for the space beyond warehousing YA fiction or equipment labs without context, the result may be teen library space that is not sufficiently welcoming, or which discourages engagement, participation, and teen ownership. The resulting ambiguity can manifest as:

- a lack of focus on what will happen in the space
- rigid and limiting ideas about how the space will be used
- an off-target age-range of clientele (older children versus teens versus adults)
- a space that forces user behavior that does not accommodate the activities teens engage in naturally
- a reliance upon features rather than responsive service and staffing models that cultivate experience
- a subtext of using space to control the clientele group

Form Follows Function

The American architect Louis Sullivan coined the phrase “form (ever) follows function” in 1896. Sullivan is noted for developing the shape of

the steel skyscraper in the late nineteenth century, a time when shifts in technology, taste, and economic forces precipitated the abandonment of established architectural styles. Architectural critics of the time proposed that this new type of building, which was multi-story and included the newly developed elevator, should incorporate classical forms, and that traditional style elements and patterns should be applied to its design. This aesthetic is reflected in Chicago's tall office buildings, which are frosted with classical columns and dressed as gothic cathedrals. Sullivan suggested that this new type of building needed an honest style that what this building looked like and its form should not be informed by the past but be determined by its function (Sullivan 1896).

An examination of the form of the public library building illustrates the same notion of applied traditional forms. Although what libraries offer users—the functions of technology, services, resources, programming, and gathering spaces—has evolved rapidly over the past few decades, the physical form of the library building has, for the most part, stayed constant.

THE CARNEGIE MODEL

The traditional public library building also has a classical precedent. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrialist Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of thousands of public libraries. The Carnegie Model divided library space into two wings—one for children and one for adults. The adult wing provided functional space for work and to warehouse books. The children's wing provided functional space where adults helped children mediate the notions of reading, language, and books. Teens seemingly did not exist in a building model with one wing for children and one wing for adults “with YAs neglected as neither or both” (Bernier 2013).

The different areas of the library can be defined by function (circulation, reference, access to technology), or by service population (children, teens, and adults). The children's section is generally the most easily recognizable part of a library because the clientele is usually of a particular physical stature, the material is visually distinct, and the hallmark service for children—the traditional story time—comes with a set

of established and recognizable spatial needs and manifestations. The children's space in a library is not necessarily meant to be used independently by children, but also by parents and caregivers who mediate the experience of the space for them, and who most likely initiated the visit to the library space. Teens, however, engage in many activities independently (i.e., without mediation of a parent or staff).

Because teen services is a new tradition, there is little scholarship and few best practices that address space planning. The following section reviews relevant theory and practices.

Teen Participation in the Development of Space

A cornerstone of teen library services is the principle that teens must be actively involved in decisions about their library experience. YALSA's *Teen Space Guidelines* suggest that teens be included in planning and be given decision-making roles in the development of space intended for their use. The active participation of teens ensures that their evolving needs and interests are being addressed, and that they will play a key role in attracting peers to the library (YALSA 2012).

Teens who are enthusiastically engaged in planning and decision-making are likely to develop a sense of ownership of the library that will enhance the quality of their library experience. This begins with the space intended for teens in the library.

YALSA guidelines for the development of teen library space suggest libraries should:

- Create a space that meets the needs of teens in the community by asking teens to play a role in the planning process
- Solicit teen feedback in the design of the space and regarding its use to allow teens to develop a sense of ownership
- Solicit teen feedback in the development of policies to ensure the space is representative of teen needs (YALSA 2012)

When libraries involved teens in planning new teen spaces, higher levels of youth participation correlated to a range of positive outcomes in the design and execution of new and renovated library teen spaces. These

positive outcomes include staff satisfaction, service quality, larger teen spaces, increased funding opportunities, decreased concern with behavioral problems, and greater sensitivity to green options and sustainability in building materials (Bernier, Males, and Rickman 2014).

Encouraging and cultivating teen participation in the space-development process begins by involving teens in focus groups and asking them what they want. But how can teen participation be continuously fostered by physical space?

It is valuable to examine the tenets of participatory culture theory to gain an understanding of large- and small-scale applications of teen participation in space development. In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, Jenkins et al. (2006) describe a participatory culture as one:

- With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
- With strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others
- With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices
- Where members believe that their contributions matter
- Where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created)

One of the tenets of a participatory culture is that not every member must contribute, but all members must believe they are free to contribute, and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued. Library space can foster this. Providing a participatory space for teens offers them a tangible venue to begin to take ownership of the library—teens can plant their flags and mark territory within the public space—and to customize it in a way that is different from other public venue experiences and opportunities, and is uniquely theirs. Ultimately, it allows teens to achieve a more empowered conception of citizenship (Jenkins et al. 2006).

Although teens are allowed to use public spaces like city parks, they are generally not allowed to direct its design, decoration, use, or ultimately determine how the space is experienced. A teen library space can be a public space developed in partnership with the intended users. This ownership is sustained through continuous reinforcement.

EXAMPLE: THE ANALOG DISPLAY WALL

In recent years, the idea of teen participation has primarily been associated with the use of technology and Web 2.0, but this participation can manifest through low-tech, low-cost means. Something many libraries may already be doing is displaying teen-created art in a teen space. Examining this practice through the lens of user participation can help teen librarians understand and apply a participatory context to such activities.

An analog display wall is a relatively low-tech method that encourages teen participation. It is a wall in a teen space where any teens can display their artwork. There are supplies readily available for teens to create drawings—teens can choose to draw and then to display their artwork on the wall.

This type of display differs from a wall where only sanctioned or adult-selected art is permanently installed, or one on which a group of teens have created a mural, which becomes static once completed, and may give any teens who were not involved in the project a sense that they are visiting someone else's space.

If teens are constantly creating and changing what is on the wall, will it look as an adult would like it to look? Probably not. But it will always reflect the users' tastes, interests, and desires. This isn't about adult aesthetics, but about teen participation. When libraries set up teen spaces that look too perfect or pristine, they eliminate possible avenues for teens to explore, create, and participate in immediate, spontaneous, and unexpected ways.

Big Picture Space Models

AFFINITY SPACE

The idea of the affinity space comes from the concept of participatory culture. An affinity space is “a place or set of places where people affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals” (Gee 2004). The library can function as an affinity space where formal and informal activities are based on the interests teens bring to the library. These formal and informal activities occur in a peer-to-peer manner, with teens functioning as innovators and experts in their areas of interest, and library staff functioning in the role of facilitators.

Suggested in the concept of affinity space is a shift in the notion of the use of library space from a space that warehouses resources (as in the

Carnegie Model), to a space for producing social experiences and incorporating user meanings (Ito et al. 2010; London et al. 2010). Libraries that cultivate an affinity space for teens create a venue focusing on the relationships teens have with information and one another, and the creation of content, artifacts, and knowledge.

Teen services librarians should look at library spaces for teens in a new way. In many ways, the teen services portion of the physical library is first to manifest changes in service delivery models and advances in public-facing technology for a given clientele group (as in Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's *ImaginOn* [<http://imaginon.org/default.asp>] and Chicago Public Library's *YouMedia* [<http://youmediachicago.org>]). These groundbreaking spaces anticipated the shift in use of library spaces/functions that are only now beginning to manifest in adult/family/all-ages space in the form of content creation labs and so-called maker-spaces and Fab Labs.

What teen services should strive for is not a Fab Lab, but a Fab Library. The key to a successful library teen space is not features, but experiences. This shift in the physical space offered to teens mirrors the way teens naturally use space. The affinity space should accommodate and foster activities that teens automatically engage in like socializing, working together in groups sharing ideas/resources/content, group play, peer mentorship, and creating things like artwork or digital content. The teen space is a place where teens bring their interest to explore, rather than having sanctioned interests imposed upon them.

During this developmental stage, when teens desire to become both strong individuals and be part of a group, they naturally self-identify by interest. In social settings, teens seek to share their interests and discover those of other teens. When teens who share mutual interests gather in the library the anatomy of what can occur in the space is shaped. The experience of the space encourages the celebration of and engagement in a given interest, activity, or topic. This can occur in an ad hoc manner that is clunky and uncomfortable, or seemingly flawless by merit of a flexible neutral space, and—most importantly—appropriate staff interaction/activation that facilitates and harnesses the robust possibilities presented by the scenario. Libraries recognizing and seeking to use this energy/activity to better meet the unique needs of teens engage in the conscious shifting of traditional library space toward affinity space.

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