

# Transforming Young Adult Services

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SECOND EDITION

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**Written and edited by Anthony Bernier**

*Foreword by John M. Budd*

ALA  
Neal-Schuman

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# Foreword to the First Edition

It is tempting to begin prefatory remarks by asking, What is a discipline? This of course is not a new question, although potential answers may have become even more elusive in recent years. As Anthony Bernier observes in his introduction, the core audience for services, the focal points of the service dynamics, and the institutional context of study present questions that the essays in this volume attempt to address. If readers will allow me a digression, I would like to situate some initial thoughts within the locus of disciplinary inquiry. I ask for forbearance because any discussion of transdisciplinary inquiry (note that I do not use the more familiar, though nearly bereft of meaning, term *interdisciplinary*) depends on a definition of *discipline*. Also, the relevance of the inquiry presented here is founded on efforts to render the thought and research into young adult services as accessible as possible. That also relies on definitional beginnings. With some trepidation I invoke the name of Thomas Kuhn (1970), who in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* argued that a discipline (or subdiscipline) is built around a paradigm, or “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by members of a given community,” and “the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution” of scientific questions (175). What happens when the constellation expands, when the boundaries of past inquiry no longer obtain?

Many formerly well-defined disciplines, even in the natural sciences, broke through those boundaries some time ago. In then rather nascent areas such as psychology, individuals like William James helped to create the kinds of questions that could be addressed. Psychology has changed markedly since James’s day, but his groundbreaking thought should not be forgotten (and may find resonance in young adult services). At this point it may be useful to return to Kuhn (1970, 180): “A paradigm governs . . . not a subject matter but a group of practitioners.” Up until this point one may think that I am denying the avowed purpose of this reader. The foregrounding must be clarified now. The transdisciplinary purpose of library and information science (LIS) is, specifically, to achieve the goals set out for and in this volume; that is, LIS cannot be constrained by the limitations of the past—limitations that too narrowly bound the scope of research and the envisioning of institution.

Bernier urges inquiry that emerges from LIS as a discipline. Fair enough. We return to the question of definition, this time with specificity, and ask, What is LIS? At the risk of being presumptuous, allow me to suggest some elements of a disciplinary framework within which young adult services can be examined and formulated. One element that many people dispute at the current time is the institutional locus of the services. Rather than irrelevant or peripheral, the institutional is essential. The institution itself is misunderstood and all too facily dismissed by some who would deny that humans gravitate to places that embody meaning for them. Libraries are such a place; most importantly, they are places of human engagement and—dare I say it—construction. One need not be a social constructionist

to accept that institutions are particularly human constructions, designed and created for purposes of interaction, exploration, and discovery. In other words, the library is a counterpoint to any naive solipsism that omits the interdependence that characterizes the human condition (if I can be permitted a bit of lofty language). There is no denying that “library as place” is a rather recent notion, but it does in some ways represent a return to ideas of the library as a learning environment. An excellent treatment of the library as place is the collection of essays edited by Buschman and Leckie (2007). Some of the essayists who contributed to that volume are also represented in this reader. The concept of the institution pervades all of the sections of the present volume and should be taken as something of a first principle for inquiry and practice in LIS. In fact, the institution is a locus for critical inquiry and practice.

Another and actually related idea is community. Institutions should not exist merely for self-perpetuation; their being has a foundation of connections among people. Institutions of specific types have specific kinds of connections as components of their essential natures. Communities look to institutions in some important ways as extensions of what they seek to be and do. Here a complex dynamic has to be introduced: Communities have multiple identities that should be recognized by the people who operate within institutions. Communities include embodied linguistic, cultural, and other groups that share one or many characteristics. To some extent the sharing is situational and can be recognized by physical and cultural environment. In other ways there are choices made by people, or what Michael Walzer (1983) calls “association.” There is a serious challenge to institutions and those who work in them here; the positions many people make are based on skepticism and suspicion when it comes to official institutions, regardless of stated missions or services of the institutions. LIS as a discipline must have as a facet the understanding of the tensions that can exist between communities and institutions, and the research and praxis in the field must address the challenge directly. Services, including young adult services, are not abstractions; they are pragmatic, even as they should have sound frameworks.

Insofar as communities are individuals who share some binding ties, librarians (within the institutions of libraries) have to embrace the inevitable sharing and difference that will occur in all interactions. Librarians must learn to accept the community members as other selves who have qualities that are commonly human, that can be commonly occurring with themselves, and as unique individuals who have cognitive, linguistic, cultural, political, and other qualities that set them apart. The understanding librarians must aspire to is that difference: Young adults, for example, are not adults. African-American young adults are not Asian-American young adults. Those who live lives of affluence are not those who live in poverty. Acceptance of these ideas necessitates accepting a phenomenological foundation for LIS. That said, youth (while an essential but not totalizing characteristic) is a component of lifeworld. Services as phenomenological actions must embrace lifeworld as simultaneously a shared mode of being and a fact of individuality.

Thinkers who include Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Paul Ricoeur have detailed precisely what these foundations entail. There is another essential characteristic of phenomenological intentionality (in addition to the acceptance of *I* and *Thou*): “Our consciousness—including of the mental acts that accompany many of our perceptions—is not merely a blank slate on which the phenomena write. Consciousness is intentional; it is directed; it has a purpose. Since consciousness is active, phenomenology must account for intentionality, for the realization that our perceptions are perceptions of something” (Budd 2005, 46–47). Intentionality applies to the librarian and the community member equally; each has an active consciousness. An implication of intentionality is

consciousness of one's own experiences. Young adults are subjects (in the sense of being reflective selves); they are not objects of professional service. It is appropriate to assume that the language of service should be able to embrace the selfhood and subjectivity of the patrons (see Zahavi 2005). What the librarian can do, and young adult services demonstrates the point starkly, is help shape what that young adult is conscious *of*, what that person *perceives*.

A third principle, referred to by Bernier, is a particular species of ethical action. Communication and discourse are naturally components of young adult services. Communication carries an ethical necessity; freedom is one element of the necessity. This is customarily referred to as intellectual freedom in librarianship; in young adult services it can mean avoidance or negation of any paternalistic protection of individuals. The readers/information users are presumed to have sufficient agency that they are able to take responsibility for what they access, see, hear, and read. There has tended to be a sort of orthodoxy of official positions regarding intellectual freedom and freedom to read and view. Orthodoxy is not always bad and is not always to be resisted; however, it should be examined critically. For example, some statements that may be taken as orthodox in particular settings could hold that gaming is deleterious to young adults. Such a claim has no merit on its face since it is not reasoned. The communicative ethics of young adult services should have a rational component, which includes the examination of what it is to be a young adult at this point in time and in the complex society. The ethical foundation in this context shares a goal with many ethical standpoints; the good life for young adults can be enhanced by services offered *in libraries by librarians*. The ethical responsibility of scholars and professionals is not to adopt a prescriptive model and apply it universally. The communicative ethics forms the third leg of the stool, along with the institution and phenomenology, to create the possibilities for a genuine LIS inquiry into young adult services.

I began with a question, and I attempted to answer it with some specificity. The question is well addressed by the authors who have contributed to this reader. The answer in this short foreword is primarily my own, but it is derived not simply from solitary contemplation, but also through discussion with colleagues, including some of the authors here. Hence, it is intended to be at least somewhat reflective, showing what is in the best inquiry today as well as what can be in future study. There is little doubt that the work presented in these pages is a breakthrough; it is something unique in young adult services scholarship. It deserves a wide and critical audience.

**John M. Budd**

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## PREFACE

# Young Adult Services at the Crossroads

**T**he first edition of *Transforming Young Adult Services* advanced the following claim: “The study and practice of young adult (YA) services within the context of library and information science (LIS) appears to be quickly approaching a crossroads.”

Several things have changed since publishing this claim. Thousands of new professionals entered the field. Communities opened new or renovated library buildings by the hundreds—many including new YA spaces, some with spaces called “makerspaces.” Some libraries adopted a new category of human development called “tween.” The American Library Association’s Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) issued many statements, guidelines, and calls for action. Librarians published many new practitioner titles, appeared on hundreds of panels and in workshops, and posted to many blogs. Libraries all over the country began to stretch more decisively toward user-defined outcomes to articulate, document, and demonstrate their public value.

On the other hand, many things did not change. The domain of professional YA services, for example, continues to languish in the backwater of broader LIS consciousness rather than receive acknowledgment as one of its crown jewels. While YA services has become an increasingly productive and dynamic subfield among LIS practitioners over the past 25 years, especially regarding the adaptation to rapid technological change, innovations in civic-engagement programming, and the introduction of equitable YA spaces in libraries, actual evidence-based research on YA services has only sporadically shown signs of life. YA services remains among the least researched aspects of LIS.

Another thing not exhibiting much change remains LIS’s stubborn refusal to acknowledge and incorporate YA service interventions, innovations, and creativity into the profession’s overall story. Introductory LIS texts in professional and graduate-level courses, for example, scarcely mention YA services.

A further critique exhibited throughout this second edition remains LIS’s continuing reluctance to engage the contributions of interdisciplinary youth studies. These include many potent contributions and influences from critical social theory to LIS and YA services.

Instead of exploring these potential benefits, however, LIS currently remains mired in a dated conceptual framework about the human experience. This prevalent framework, borrowed nearly exclusively from developmental psychology, includes roots stretching back to the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment.

This view, when applied to contemporary young adults, defines the innocuous sounding “youth development” paradigm. Youth development embodies a totalizing theory, a hegemonic vision of “youth” as a naturally imperfect, embattled, inadequate, transitory life “stage,” exclusively defined in opposition to fully flowered fantasies of ill-defined “mature



adulthood.” According to this paradigm, achieving such a mystical “adult” status occurs only if assisted by very particular types and kinds of interventions. One need go no further to find broad institutional affirmation of these claims than the division of the American Library Association dedicated to serving YAs, the Young Adult Library Services Association. YALSA’s current strategic concepts, prominent in the association’s aspirational documents and statements, too quickly elide member value for presumptuous claims about “alleviating” YA “problems.” LIS’s uncritical implementation and recalcitrant dedication to youth development, and only youth development, reveals that libraries promote themselves as numbering among these particular interventions. LIS maintains this claim, however, without evidence to support it.

In response, the work advanced in this edition of *Transforming Young Adult Services* collectively instigates a debate among LIS students, LIS instructors, practitioners, and researchers. It asks the field to consider alternatives to this historical default and dedication to youth development and advocates articulating an LIS-specific vision of today’s YAs to transform and reorient the daily practice of professional YA librarianship.

Such a project promises to focus and elevate the profile of YA work rather than extend its current position in LIS’s backwater. It will raise awareness of the effectiveness and meaning of libraries’ contributions with young people. It can recast and revalue the contributions professionals make to not only YAs but also their institutions, and thus society. And because scholars contributed most of the material for this collection, it partially meets scholarship’s responsibility to constantly examine professional practice and offer new and innovative ideas for how libraries can increase the well-being of their communities.

In order to achieve these aspirations, *Transforming Young Adult Services* brings together some of the field’s best YA researchers and evidence-based practitioners who write from their specialized experiences, perspectives, and strengths. Collectively these contributors demonstrate facility with the most applicable scholarship and writing on YA librarianship, broader youth studies, and critical social theory.

On the way to articulating their respective interpretations about how LIS should envision YAs, these experts cull and synthesize LIS literature to produce a resource identifying many essential topics pertinent to the application of daily YA services. These topics include youth identity formation (including racial identity and gender identity), YA materials and collections, youth development, models of intergenerational youth participation, critical perspectives on youth studies, storytelling and programming, public and school librarianship, YA services history, intellectual freedom (in various institutional contexts), and professional ethics. Together, this collection conceptually and historically interrogates the field’s conventional categories to examine how they currently produce and manifest an inadequate and derived institutional imagination of today’s youth.

In *Transforming Young Adult Services*, readers will discover research articles and studies that augment the many up-to-date and sufficiently detailed lists of resources that currently inform LIS and professional YA practice (resource guides, manuals, collection building references, sample forms and documents, program and outreach models, and tips for using technology, for instance). More importantly, this collection poses hard and even uncomfortable questions about LIS’s current assumptions regarding youth and what it often defines as “best practice”—as opposed to what it can actually prove as *being* best practice. Thus, this collection inaugurates what should become a new and much needed foundational debate about how LIS conceives of today’s young adults.

## WHO SHOULD READ *TRANSFORMING YOUNG ADULT SERVICES*

While no single collection can legitimately claim to address all relevant topics, or even to cover the most important topics to the same degree, *Transforming Young Adult Services* attempts to introduce critical social theory to the broadest, most compelling, most practical aspects of YA librarianship.

As mentioned earlier, however, this collection does not attempt to offer readers another resource guide. The profession already produces prodigiously on that score. Nor does it claim to offer final answers to all of the vexing questions it raises. This collection nevertheless does attempt to articulate the conceptual contours that explain, underlie, and frame how LIS currently perceives, positions, delivers, and values YA work. It aims to help students, instructors, and professionals define YA users for their own institutional purposes and thus better understand how their institutions can apply these perceptions in daily practice and research.

For LIS students, *Transforming Young Adult Services* concentrates on fundamental aspects of YA librarianship that currently go unaddressed in daily practice. It offers to enrich critical appreciation of the history and traditions of YA services, identify some of the current challenges in delivering YA services, and encourage making informed decisions about the YA users students are preparing to serve. It will also help students become better interpreters of LIS research and more reflective consumers of information related to the incessant moral panics about youth that pervade today's culture through popular parlance, media, and public policy. Moreover, students will come to understand the potential for dynamic innovation through debate (not mere lists of prescriptions) and the creativity that YA professionalism truly offers.

*Transforming Young Adult Services* also promises to benefit professionals, paraprofessionals, and administrators currently responsible for YA services. This collection connects and contextualizes larger concerns that color and inform the legacy practices and daily assumptions they have inherited and will help them better evaluate the choices still before them that can easily go unrecognized. Many of these choices offer to influence all aspects of YA service formation, innovation, delivery, and evaluation. School library and media specialists, particularly those working with youth in middle school and high school, will also find a great deal of this material applicable to pursuing the curricular missions of their host institutions.

LIS faculty and instructors will likewise find this a rich collection of diverse concepts and arguments to spark lively discussion and productive assignments with which to prepare students for becoming deliberative professional practitioners. Each section addresses different categorical approaches to YA services that, like the individual studies, lend themselves to comparing and contrasting engagements. Instructors can combine and parlay various configurations of chapters and essays into different conceptual and applied exercises.

## A RISING DEBATE IN FIVE SECTIONS

*Transforming Young Adult Services* organizes chapters into five parts meaningful to LIS students, professional librarians, and instructors as well as to scholars. To one degree or another, all of these studies and essays challenge prevailing LIS approaches and seek to transform YA services professionalism by interrogating the need for a more LIS-specific vision of its end user.

The collection opens with “Introduction: Making the Case for Transforming,” a contextualizing historical analysis of the crossroads YA services is rapidly approaching.

Part I, “Betweenness,” presents a topically conventional yet provocative collection of studies. In the first chapter, “Envisaging Young Adult Librarianship from a Teen-Centered Perspective,” LIS scholar Professor Denise E. Agosto, of Drexel University, conducts a content analysis of three years of LIS research and practitioner writing about YA services. Agosto uncovers a pattern of professional discourse that, despite the past decade’s intense policy-level discussion about “youth involvement,” continues, in actual practice, to project itself as “adult-centered.” This contribution inaugurates the discussion by urging LIS professionals to become more self-aware of the homilies they speak and write about and to move beyond a systematic concentration on youth experience.

In chapter 2, “Diverse Identity in Anxious Times: Young Adult Literature and Contemporary Culture,” English Professor Karen Coats, of Illinois State University, offers an updated essay from the first edition. Coats extends Agosto’s investigation by reaching deep into contemporary YA fiction to derive and advocate for a fluid LIS vision of today’s youth—one oscillating between the benefits she sees in youth development as well as more dynamic social constructions of youth identity. Coats filters the question of how youth are constructed through literary criticism and arrives at a theoretically sophisticated analysis to argue the importance of understanding how youth identity is “dialogically engaged” in a project of individual “self-fashioning.” Mobilizing the postmodern concentration on fluid meanings of the self, Coats suggests that research and practice on that front would better serve LIS than does the prevailing modernist interpretation of the self as static and solid.

Chapter 3’s contribution, new to the second edition, by Dr. Mary Ann Harlan, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Teacher Librarian Program at San José State University’s School of Information, plainly lays out the challenge of envisioning a betweenness in YA users for LIS professionals in schools in “Students or Learners? Conceptualizing Youth in School Libraries.” Highlighting a theme that emerges repeatedly in *Transforming Young Adult Services*, this study explores the nature of how YA identity emerges from negotiations in—sometimes cooperating with and sometimes competing against—conflicting institutional visions. In this instance, Harlan grapples with the dynamic relationships of education’s institutional vision of itself and the information professional’s identity and commitments as an ethical practitioner.

While all of the contributions in part I ostensibly address conventional and fundamental categories of daily LIS practice and research, they more importantly interrogate cardinal and legacy practices from different perspectives. These topics may appear familiar at first. Careful reading, however, will yield critical insights suggesting increasingly radical departures from common daily practices. After many years of lectures, workshops, conference presentations, books, and articles about the need for LIS to more deeply engage “youth participation” and youth-centric services, as Agosto and others point out, these notions have failed to gain broad or sufficient institutional penetration into daily practice. It is also clear that what constitutes LIS’s current definition of “youth” also at least partly obstructs the emergence of more flexible and diverse approaches—concepts more contested or negotiated despite the long-standing impulse for LIS to borrow a static and simplistic age-based definition. The field must confront this dilemma head-on and imagine its own LIS-specific vision of young people.

Part II, “Intellectual Freedom,” opens with another common theme emerging throughout the collection in arguing for the inclusion of YA literature itself as a meaningful indicator of how LIS envisions YA library users. These contributions appear particularly well-timed

to respond to today's cacophony of unleashed information. While information appears on the surface to be ubiquitous, forces both inside and outside the library strain against YA access issues. What do these competing forces teach about how LIS should envision young library users while at the same time reconciling professional ethics?

Dr. Lucia Cedeira Serantes, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Certificate in Children's and Young Adult Services of the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, City University of New York, probes that question in chapter 4. In "Misfits, Loners, Immature Students, and Reluctant Readers: Librarianship in the Construction of Teen Readers of Comics," Cedeira Serantes presents historical analysis reflecting how the field has manifested its visions of library users through its reception, and rejection, of particular literary genres. This study's content analysis critically engages LIS's historical reactions against comics, tracking all the way back through the 1930s. Cedeira Serantes documents the systematic and institutional marginalization of both the literary form and its readers as it coexisted with the form's enthusiastic reception by those readers—all this despite the profession's traditional espousal of values supporting freedom of access. The materials sitting on library shelves, as well as those that never make it to the shelves in the first place, tell an unfortunate and lingering tale of how LIS has envisioned YA users. Few observers have so clearly drawn connections between library collections and the ways in which LIS deploys its vision of youth as has Cedeira Serantes.

The author of chapter 5, "Identity at Odds: The Sometimes Conflicting Viewpoints about Young Adults' Rights in Libraries," is Dr. Cherie Givens, attorney, LIS scholar, and lecturer at San José State University's School of Information and author of *Information Privacy Fundamentals for Librarians and Information Professionals* (2014). In light of the preceding chapters, Givens's study (updated from the first edition) continues the questioning of how LIS should envision today's youth and further prefigures the crossroads the profession is quickly approaching. Givens asks how the field should align itself ethically in advancing the rights and intellectual freedom of contemporary youth. Here the conflicting paradigms of modernism's static and universal conflating of chronological age and maturity "development" chafe against postmodernism's increasingly urgent questions regarding the socially constructed meaning of chronological age itself. Givens's thesis is that LIS must constantly weigh the legal status of youth (with all its inconsistencies, ironies, contradictions, and complexities) against professional virtues, aspirations, and ethical commitments.

Dr. Jeanie Austin, a recent PhD from the iSchool at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in another new contribution to the second edition, extends Harlan's chapter 3 study. Austin presses for an LIS-specific vision of YAs within the relational context of a complex host institution in chapter 6, "Situating Youth Voice: Moving from Understanding to Action through Critical Theory." Austin applies postmodernism's concern with identity and power relations to the tensions between the juvenile detention system on one hand and racial privilege and heterosexual normativity on the other. Austin brings together powerful factors of identity formation inclusive of youth of color, LGBTQ youth, and gender-nonconforming youth with an institutional host not known for supporting LIS's ethical commitments to information access or intellectual freedom.

This second part, "Intellectual Freedom," certainly points to the difficulties LIS faces when attempting to define its young adult user. On one hand, considering the more open public library (as addressed by many authors), institutions such as schools (as addressed by Harlan), and centers of juvenile detention (as addressed by Austin), it is easy to identify at least three entirely different missions—each seeking its own institutional outcomes. On the

other hand, however, the very complexity of this dilemma points directly to the value in recognizing the master's degree in library and information science as capable of producing *one* profession that addresses all of these (and other environments, such as libraries in religious institutions or on Native American reservations). Grappling with the complex vision of YA users emphasizes how important it is that professionals engage this question for their own respective communities and contexts.

Michael Cart, well-known YA literature critic and columnist, past president of YALSA, and the first recipient of the YALSA/Greenwood Publishing Group Service to Young Adults Achievement Award, begins part III, "Confronting Convention." Cart revisits youth identity to confront convention in a particularly provocative way in chapter 7, "Crossing Over: The Advent of the Adultescent." This study examines historical and contemporary texts in youth psychology and sociology to reevaluate concretized chronologically based notions of how LIS categorizes young library users in light of current economic exigencies. In Cart's analysis, today's social conditions suggest that the prevailing LIS category of "youth" itself now requires redefinition based not upon a conventional chronological notion of "teen" but on an "emerging," more prolonged process toward adulthood. Cart explores the institutional implications of this insight through the LIS practice of book reviewing and collection development procedures.

The second chapter in part III, "Storytelling, Young Adults, and Three Paradoxes," another new contribution to this edition, is by Dr. Kate McDowell, Associate Professor, School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. McDowell accords with Cart in reexamining chronological age but goes further in critically assessing prevailing notions of the youth development paradigm for obstructing the articulation of an LIS-specific vision of YAs within the dynamic triangular processes and relationships otherwise available through storytelling.

In chapter 9, Dr. Kafi D. Kumasi, Associate Professor and youth scholar at Wayne State University's School of Library and Information Science, employs critical race theory (CRT) in "'The Library Is Like Her House': Reimagining Youth of Color in LIS Discourses." Kumasi provokes questions about the implications of white racial privilege in defining today's YA library-using population. However, unlike other authors who argue that we must concentrate greater resources on youth experience, Kumasi argues that because the current construction of YA library users in the LIS imagination remains coded racially as white, the first order of business requires greater reflection on the meanings of the white privilege of LIS *professionals*. Moreover, while the critique of an underacknowledged racial privilege among professionals in LIS is not new, it is certainly a new question to raise when assessing YA services specifically. In this insightful and provocative turn, Kumasi challenges the intellectual and conceptual efficacy of the illusionary "color blind" cliché.

Part IV of *Transforming Young Adult Services*, "Emergent Roles," not only builds upon a largely forgotten history of competent and active youth community engagement but also extends study into current youth activism. Youth in large numbers, LIS professionals should recall, were productive farmers of urban victory gardens during the 1940s. Youth were activists in gaining African Americans access to public facilities (like libraries!) in the 1950s and 1960s and throughout the larger civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1970s. They have played gainful roles as protestors against harsh anti-immigration policies since the mid-2000s. They constitute active participants and leaders in recent Occupy, youth voter enfranchisement, police misconduct, and gun reform movements. Part IV parlays and translates these legacies of youth agency into critical studies to inform a new vision of YAs for libraries.



Wendy Schaetzel Lesko, Executive Director of Washington, DC's Youth Activism Project (YAP), contributes chapter 10, "Beyond Coaching: Copiloting with Young Adults." Lesko points out how YAP's intergenerational School Girls Unite effort serves as yet another demonstration (this time on the international stage) of the influence youth can make upon civil society and public policy—not in some abstract future, as promoted under youth development, but in the here and now young people live in. While the rhetoric promoting "youth participation" is not new, few researchers and institutions have mined or implemented the intergenerational partnership model illustrated by Lesko. Perhaps by reaching for successful experiences of other youth-serving efforts, beyond simply the psychology department, LIS might achieve an interdisciplinary sophistication capable of articulating a vision of youth more relevant to its own institutional aspirations and professional obligations.

Chapter 11 features one of the most decorated practitioners and influential scholars in YA services. Dr. Mary K. Chelton, Professor Emeritus, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, City University of New York, cofounder of *Voice of Youth Advocates* (VOYA), and the second past president of YALSA to appear in *Transforming Young Adult Services*, contributes a new study in "LIS's Vision of Young Adults: Some Historical Roots for Current Theories and Practice." Chelton recuperates and reflects upon several generations of YA library services history to acknowledge not only some of the qualified benefits the youth development paradigm has offered LIS, defending LIS's importation of it from outside the discipline, but also LIS's "fixation" on it to the exclusion of other approaches. In responding to conversations she detects surfacing in LIS, Chelton explores notions of a dynamic YA identity already at play.

The fifth and final part of *Transforming Young Adult Services*, "From Citizenship to Membership," critically addresses the degree to which youth development hegemony continues to serve or inhibit LIS in general and YA services in particular. The chapters in this section continue to deepen engagement with YA services history and the consequences of its traditional avoidance of critical social theory and deconstructionism.

Sociologist and former University of California faculty Dr. Mike Males, Senior Researcher with San Francisco's Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice, addresses how LIS should envision today's YAs in chapter 12. In this revised version of "Tribalism versus Citizenship: Are Youth Increasingly Unwelcome in Libraries?" Males introduces LIS to the work of classical anthropologist Margaret Mead. Unlike the pro-youth development positions represented in some of this collection's studies, Males's investigation shows how today's youth demographics, and patterns of technological adoption, constitute much of why youth studies scholarship demonstrates increasing skepticism of the explanatory power of the dominant youth development paradigm. Further, as in many other essays in this collection, Males takes issue with the assumed youth/adult bifurcation at the ideological core of youth development. Also in accord with other essays, Males contends that YA identity stems from youth and adult interaction ("synergetic" relationships), not simply from inherent or biological opposition. Ignoring this binary youth/adult tradition, he asserts, risks concretizing "adult tribalism" and unnecessarily hardens social institutions like libraries against the possibility of age integration or intergenerational possibilities. Instead, like Chelton and others, Males continues to examine what the notion of "citizen" holds for LIS practice and research.

In chapter 13, Paulette Rothbauer, Associate Professor in the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Information and Media Studies, engages the question of how LIS should envision today's YAs in "Imagining Today's Young Adults in LIS: Moving Forward with Critical Youth Studies," a revision of her study in the first edition. By extending concerns

opened here by Chelton, Males, and others, Rothbauer more deeply probes the historical assumptions of youth as an “essential stage” in human development rooted in the field of psychology since the late nineteenth century. In the essay’s direct engagement with the long-dominant paradigm of youth development in LIS research and practice, Rothbauer examines many of the stereotypes that LIS has long taken for granted and through which YA services have largely been, and continue to be, defined. Rothbauer resolves that “our heavy reliance on theories of human development is, perhaps, unwarranted.” In Males and in Rothbauer, in particular, we continue to see a rising tide of critical youth studies scholars who are no longer willing to abide a strict and unquestioned LIS commitment to the developmentalist apparatus.

Contributing chapter 14, “Moving Beyond YAs as ‘Citizens’: The Promise of Membership,” is Dr. Anthony Bernier, professor at San José State University’s School of Information, former member of the American Library Association’s Committee on Accreditation, and Chair of the SJSU iSchool Youth Services Program Advisory Committee. Bernier builds upon the criticism of what he coins as the “youth development industrial complex,” introduced earlier and variously throughout *Transforming Young Adult Services*. This study offers a systematic evaluation of the pros and cons of defining YAs as citizens and ultimately comes to rest upon a more robust valuation of how a vision of YAs, cultivated explicitly as members of local community, can enhance YA services praxis across the library’s entire institutional profile.

This second edition of *Transforming Young Adult Services* concludes with “Membership’s Promise for Praxis,” also by Bernier, a systematic reflection on a vision of YAs as local community members applied to a comprehensive YA service profile. Thus, the final chapter synthesizes many of the collection’s themes and culminates with several specific ways in which to combine critical social theory, LIS practice, and a relevant yet dynamic vision of young people into a responsive and contemporary praxis (theory plus practice).

## THE CROSSROADS AHEAD: PRACTICE AND THEORY

LIS rapidly approaches a conceptual “crossroads.” The notion of youth development continues to come under increasing scrutiny in broader youth studies analysis (in history, anthropology, and sociology; in feminist, race, and gender studies; in postmodernism and deconstructionism; among others). Its fundamental assumptions about youth, however, stubbornly continue seemingly cemented into LIS orthodoxy and practice.

Yet the rift widens. The gap continues to expand between increasingly moribund assumptions, on the one hand, and a diverse variety of approaches informed by critical social theory propelling analysis of contemporary culture, scholarship, and practice capable of producing a vibrant and complex vision of young adults, on the other.

What should happen if LIS remains unwilling or incapable of crafting its own vision of YAs? Will the institutional pronouncements, ethical guidelines, or other aspirational documents to which professionals point, the ritualistic incantations about “intellectual freedom,” for example, or references to the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, or even the U.S. Constitution itself, resolve the concerns raised throughout this work?

By introducing and exploring more explicit theoretically informed approaches, the contributions in *Transforming Young Adult Services* boldly begin to separate from the prevailing and popular LIS modernist framework (one preoccupied with experience as the major mode of analysis). Instead these contributions pursue questions associated with postmodernism

(analytical modes concentrating more on varying and diverse meanings and dynamic power relations).

Currently, LIS concentrates nearly exclusively on determining, measuring, and drawing understanding from questions derived from hardened institutional assumptions focusing on only the differences between youth and adults. Conversely, this collection seeks to understand how LIS should envision YAs by questioning the *meanings users themselves derive* from libraries through the negotiations of identity and power relations between libraries, YAs, and society.

In perhaps still the most seminal observation made to date about LIS research on YA services, Christine A. Jenkins notes, “If . . . library programs and services for children is insufficiently studied . . . [research on] programs and services for young adults is nearly non-existent.”<sup>1</sup> At long last, LIS needs to reconcile why this statement remains true. The authors in this collection have begun answering.

## A FINAL WORD ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

The essays in this collection attempt to both analyze LIS’s default vision of today’s YAs and inaugurate new questions, approaches, and ideas to fuel a long-needed debate. Readers will encounter authors with differing positions. Some continue to mine and exploit the youth development paradigm for what it might still contribute to library work with young people. Some demonstrate ambiguous or conflicted opinions about this prevailing approach. Readers will also encounter authors increasingly calling into question what I term the youth development industrial complex (YDIC) to advance more decisive and critical perspectives.

The chief intention of this collection is to instigate debate, not resolve these matters for all libraries or for all professionals or for all young adults. Readers expecting clear “answers” to the issues posed here may be disappointed. On the other hand, readers may find validity in, and be persuaded by, the importance of this conversation to the health and advancement of LIS work, the institution, and its connections with young people and their communities.

*Transforming Young Adult Services* does not endorse one particular view or replace one hegemonic vision of YAs with another. Instead, it acknowledges the present interregnum the field is currently entering. There is always a hinge time after the king dies and a new order emerges. The collection does intend, however, to open up important questions from all of the positions and concerns advanced here and to propel forward a debate about that new order.

A thriving professional community should value the diversity represented in these views. But there is nothing alchemical or magical in combining and contrasting these works against one another. The contributors present them here precisely to open debate.

At base, however, beyond posing questions and proposing responses to the core concern about how LIS should envision today’s young people, this collection lodges a profound concern that the profession, in near derelict avoidance and incuriosity about its own legacies, contributions, and impacts, fails to identify the larger conceptual continuities underlying library work. Nor does it currently offer evidence in response to the consequences. LIS, with respect to the social theory challenges swirling around academic and professional circles for at least the past half century, nearly ignored critical engagement about service to YAs.

Mature and influential professions produce the visions of youth they need to make viable contributions to society. Psychology produces youth as patients, clients, and research



subjects. Education envisions youth as students and pupils. Criminal justice imagines youth as suspects and perpetrators. Communities of faith envision congregants. Even the physical education department envisions youth as athletes. Yet, uninformed by more recent critical social theory, LIS allows others to perform its intellectual labor and define young library users.

LIS, as a profession, invests too completely in the models furnished by developmental psychology, a discipline with vested intellectual and ideological commitments devoted to its own institutional agenda. Much of this has manifested in LIS's viewing young people against a backdrop of perpetual sentimentality or exaggerated threat. Why has LIS reclined so long in the shadow of another discipline? Why do other youth studies fields ignore LIS contributions?<sup>2</sup> Why has LIS exhibited such an incurious consensus about envisioning youth?

This misguided institutional legacy obscures and deflects the emergence and advance of LIS's knowledge and vision of young people at the expense of serving a much wider array and deeper scope of ordinary youth. It prevents other scholarly and service traditions from regarding LIS professionals more seriously as contributors to knowledge or research about youth and even as aspirants to institutional leadership and management.<sup>3</sup> Further, it no doubt contributes to why YA services does not even register in LIS's broader self-conceptualizations.<sup>4</sup>

*Transforming Young Adult Services* demonstrates that LIS is capable of fitfully engaging earnest debates about different ways to envision the young people it seeks to serve. It argues that LIS should, and is capable of, articulating its own vision of what libraries should be in the life of YAs, rather than perpetually defining them as needy youth in the life of the institution. It holds out the possibility that the nature of LIS's ethical obligations to the communities it serves need not be limited to uncritically deploying derived visions. It advocates that these professional obligations extend to and include robust intellectual engagement with the larger ideas of our age. Youth historian Philip Graham characterized part of the problem this way:

Now that women have been liberated, the grey power of the elderly has been asserted, racism is publicly ostracized, and facilities for the disabled are legally required in all public places, the teens have become the last group whose disempowerment is invisible because it is so much taken for granted.<sup>5</sup>

LIS ought not number among the professions that take youth volition, history, and culture for granted. LIS students and professionals are entitled to a challenging deliberation over envisioning youth. The authors appearing in this collection welcome you to this discussion and to the coming debate.

**Anthony Bernier**

## NOTES

1. C. A. Jenkins, "The History of Youth Services Librarianship: A Review of the Research Literature," *Libraries and Culture* 35, no. 1 (2000), 119. Of course there are many reasons why LIS research on YA services remains in this debilitating state. Jenkins's work in this article begins to identify some of them, but a more comprehensive assessment both exceeds the scope of this project and remains unaddressed.
2. For a selection of contemporary youth studies monographs that simply ignore LIS, see A. Lange, *The Design of Childhood: How the Material World Shapes Independent Kids* (New York: Bloomsbury

- Publishing, 2018); J. Conner and S. M. Rosen, eds., *Contemporary Youth Activism: Advancing Social Justice in the United States* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2016); R. G. Gonzales, *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); D. Macallair, *After the Doors Were Locked: A History of Youth Corrections in California and the Origins of Twenty-First Century Reform* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); R. D. Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015); R. Burrow Jr., *A Child Shall Lead Them: Martin Luther King Jr., Young People, and the Movement* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); S. Costanza-Chock, *Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets! Transmedia Organizing and the Immigrant Rights Movement* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).
3. LIS has not contributed meaningfully to critical youth studies despite a century of working at close hand with youth. On the other hand, critical youth studies scholarship continues to innovate not simply conceptually and ideologically but methodologically as well. See, for instance, these examples illustrating how critical youth scholars incorporate even the most marginalized youth populations into the center of their research agenda: N. Mirra, A. Garcia, and E. Morrell, *Doing Youth Participatory Action Research: Transforming Inquiry with Researchers, Educators, and Students* (New York: Routledge, 2016); E. Tuck and K. W. Yang, eds., *Youth Resistance Research and Theories of Change* (New York: Routledge, 2014); N. Lesko and S. Talburt, eds., *Keywords in Youth Studies: Tracing Affects, Movements, Knowledges* (New York: Routledge, 2012); M. Kellett, *Rethinking Children and Research* (London: Continuum International, 2010); T. M. Brown and L. F. Rodriguez, *Youth Participatory Action Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009); S. Heath, R. Brooks, E. Cleaver, and E. Ireland, *Researching Young People's Lives* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009); A. L. Best, ed., *Representing Youth: Methodological Issues in Critical Youth Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); J. Cammarota and M. Fine, eds., *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research* (New York: Routledge, 2007); M. Delgado, *Designs and Methods for Youth-Led Research* (London: Sage, 2006); S. Fraser, V. Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellett, and C. Robinson, eds., *Doing Research with Children and Young People* (London: Sage, 2005).
  4. In none of these standard LIS survey texts, among some of the most cited and respected treatments of the field, do YA services play a significant role: K. Haycock and M. Romaniuk, *The Portable MLIS: Insights from the Experts*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2018); S. Hirsh, *Information Services Today: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); and R. E. Rubin, *Foundations of Library and Information Science*, 4th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2017); J. L. Ayala and S. Guarena, eds., *Pathways to Progress: Issues and Advances in Latino Librarianship* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2012); J. Pateman and J. Vincent, *Public Libraries and Social Justice* (Surry, England: Ashgate, 2010); G. M. Eberhart, ed., *The Whole Library Handbook 2: Current Data, Professional Advice, and Curiosa about Libraries and Library Services* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1995).
  5. P. J. Graham, *The End of Adolescence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1. Also see P. S. Fass, "How the Old Can Learn from the Young," *The American Historian*, no. 8 (May 2016), 21–25.

# INTRODUCTION

## Making the Case for Transforming

Anthony Bernier

Every generation of American professional experts sends up “clear-cut” answers, its own doctrinal certainties and Olympian universalisms, about “youth.” In stepping back to examine the history of the “child sciences” since their invention, largely in the late nineteenth century, two competing visions or discursive constructions about young adults (adolescents, teenagers) have dominated library and information science (LIS). One expert discourse articulates the degree to which society should exercise *power and control* over the young; the other favors a particular notion of *freedom*. Together, however, they form a powerful consensus view of young adults.

Each doctrine advances its own governing vision of youth rooted in assumptions and truth claims tethering goals to particular procedures, techniques, policies, methods, strategies, and resources for achieving them. This introduction to the second edition of *Transforming Young Adult Services* contextualizes and coheres the essays to argue that while there certainly are distinctions to be drawn between late-nineteenth-century and contemporary visions of youth, these distinctions share more than may at first be apparent. Another insight percolating up in analyzing visions of young adults (hereafter “YAs”) is that LIS has only ever *borrowed* from these early discourses; it has yet to advance a vision of its own.

Stated more specifically, today’s LIS vision of YAs largely echoes the influence of developmental psychology advanced originally over a century ago rather than having developed its own vision rooted in contemporary thinking or its own institutional obligations and responsibilities.

This introduction, and the studies that follow, trace this legacy. This collection inquires after the implications and consequences these assumptions visit on LIS’s strategic and institutional imaginations in delivering YA services. The analysis grows from an assessment that LIS has primarily pursued its connection to youth focused mainly on how YAs fit within the life of the library rather than examining how the library can matter in the life of youth.<sup>1</sup> The collective analysis emerging from these essays attempts to cultivate and prefigure future LIS teaching, practice, and research about whom libraries feel they serve when they seek to serve YAs.

A core argument advanced here is that perpetuating and uncritically reproducing dated and derivative views of youth constitute an ongoing intellectual failure of LIS to incorporate theoretical and contemporary approaches.<sup>2</sup> In avoiding engagement with critical social theory in general, and YA librarianship in particular, LIS has defaulted into borrowing essentially unchallenged century-old visions of youth rather than constituting a vision more suited to its own distinct mission in the here and now.<sup>3</sup>

This collection thus applies directly to YA services the observations of Gloria Leckie and John Buschman that “there is a tendency in LIS to adapt theoretical perspectives from other disciplines, often doing so without a critical or complete understanding.”<sup>4</sup> This debilitating avoidance has delayed and deflected LIS’s institutional advancement and the development of its professional capacities, has visited decades of dated approaches on the nation’s young people, and has thus contributed to LIS’s lagging far behind today’s best thinking on youth.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND THE WALLPAPER THREAT

**Why, I have seen wallpaper which must lead a boy brought up under its influence to a career of crime; you should not have such incentives to sin lying about your drawing-room.**

—Oscar Wilde, 1882

Historical analysis of Western civilization’s emerging views about distinguishing young people from adults properly points back as far as the late seventeenth century’s Enlightenment. Prior to that time children received about the same treatment as adults.

Two key figures began to establish a new and fundamentally distinct role for young people within the family and society: English philosopher John Locke and French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In ways not too distinct from prevalent contemporary views of youth, Locke argued that parental (adult) intervention was required to impart and model intellectual reasoning to children/youth assumed to be inherently “incomplete, inadequate, and imperfect.”<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Locke, Rousseau argued that youth should rather be left alone, in their “natural” innocence, to discover and make sense of the world at their own pace. Rousseau proposed that children represented a *tabula rasa* (a blank slate) upon which experience would inscribe a coherent and rational interpretation of the world.

The strategies advocated by Locke and Rousseau differed, of course. However, more important for our purposes is to understand what they *share*: a growing preoccupation with the inherent and natural differences youth represented vis-à-vis adults.

Still, it is not until the late nineteenth century when Western culture began to increasingly aspire to influential claims of “scientific” certitude about these presumptively essential differences. Science rendered its claims through empirical or positivist inquiry (today we might call it “modernist” inquiry) and tried through this approach to rationalize and become “professional” about raising the young. This period, too, produced two intellectual giants, both, significantly, psychologists: G. Stanley Hall and the less well-known Emmett L. Holt.<sup>6</sup>

Separately and together, Hall and Holt successfully influenced child rearing for generations of mothers, nurses, caregivers, social workers, faith leaders, journalists, criminologists, educators, and policy makers. Together they sought in particular to steel mother and child against the unnerving influences of rapidly industrialized urban life. Together they reflect the discourse on youth that continues to reverberate down through today’s LIS practice and research.

On the one hand, G. Stanley Hall, echoing Rousseau, represents the more famous “freedom and intimacy” child-rearing and “child-saving” discourse of the late nineteenth century (see table I.1). Freedom and intimacy’s positivist claims to “expert knowledge” emerged to exercise influential cultural power flowing from them. Considered more a “romantic”

**TABLE I.1** G. Stanley Hall's Universal Claims about the Needs of Youth

<b>G. STANLEY HALL / "FREEDOM AND INTIMACY"</b>	
▪ Autonomy	▪ "Liberty" and experimentation
▪ Nature	▪ "Child-centered"
▪ Love and "bonding"	▪ Progressive/evolutionary

than a rationalist, Hall combined something of a post-Darwinian biology (nature adapts and evolves) with a proto-Freudian psychology (unconscious energies). He defined adolescence in particular as a "developmental turning point, a larval stage" in human experience.<sup>7</sup> Hall's views, it should be noted, included strong doses of those particularly Freudian preoccupations with gender and sex.

Hall parted company with the Rousseauian tradition, however. Where Rousseau advocated that youth be left largely on their own to discover the world, Hall advanced a powerful and increasingly popular notion about specific kinds of adult interventions he felt youth required to achieve productive adulthood.

In Hall's view, youthful passions required channeling. In one of his several appearances before national audiences of librarians, for instance, he warned attendees at the 1919 American Library Association conference that girls' books must be "calculated to fit them for domestic life or womanly vocations." More generally he wrote that all youth were "emotionally unstable, and must have excitement" or the consequences would result in youth seeking excitement on their own in "sex or drink."<sup>8</sup> For Hall, unlike for Rousseau, youth "nature" required taming.

Here we can clearly observe the birth of what I have termed today's youth development industrial complex (hereafter YDIC). The YDIC agenda, promoting a vision of youth virtually indistinguishable in youth services today, represents an ever-burgeoning institutional paradigm constituted in an elaborate and sprawling apparatus of career interests, pedantic ideology, and age-segregationist procedures ostensibly intended to deflect the biological "instability" (or nature) hard-wired, Hall argued, into all youth.

Consistent with other soaring tropes of the nineteenth century, Hall also coined the provocative term "adolescent race." Conflating pseudo-Darwinian notions of racial and adolescent inferiority (compared to only idealized white "adulthood"), he argued that society needed to "civilize" youth in ways not too dissimilar from the ways in which other "childlike and savage races" were thought to require "civilizing" during this time. This nineteenth-century age/race/gender synthesis reverberates endlessly in today's views of presumed antisocial youth behaviors regarding "youth violence," "teen pregnancy," "teen substance abuse," "the teen brain," and a seamlessly endless list of moral panics, including today's hot-button issues surrounding so-called "youth cyberbullying" and "sexting" and the growing screeds of "screen abolitionists." According to Hall's science, without constant adult surveillance and civilizing programming efforts, such as those promulgated even in today's YDIC, society would suffer the consequences of innate youthful savagery.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to Hall, psychologist Emmett L. Holt launched the "power and control" regime. Echoing Locke from the late seventeenth century, Holt advanced a rubric of child-rearing strategies rooted in rationalized scientific management. But unlike Hall's "softer" approach, Holt advocated a strict and didactic catechism of adult controls, routines, regulations, and rules (see table I.2).

TABLE I.2 Emmett L. Holt’s Universal Claims about the Needs of Youth

EMMETT L. HOLT / “POWER AND CONTROL”	
• Conformity	• Prevention
• Nurture	• Parent-centered
• Hierarchy of authority	• Traditional/conventional

This “harder” approach deployed a rhetoric that, in effect, particularly elevated middle-class mothers from conventional domestic roles—effectively promoting bourgeois motherhood from the familiar sphere as a domestic manager to a more powerful, semipublic, and paraprofessional child-rearing specialist. It was mothers the young required, according to Holt, to model and teach “steadiness to fortify them against a disorderly—and ever more materialistic, distracting world.” “In these days,” wrote Holt, “of factory and locomotive whistles, trolley cars and automobiles, music boxes and the numberless mechanical toys in the nursery, door-bells and telephones in the house,” sensory bombardment threatened youth maturation into adulthood and thus threatened the order of Victorian society itself.<sup>10</sup>

For Holt, only a strong, consistent, rational, and regular regimen ensured that youth yielded up “compliance without conflict” in the face of modern society’s demands. If achieved, however, Holt promised that youth would mature into sturdy and independent middle-class adults.

Recognizing Holt’s “harder” approach as an early predecessor of today’s “zero tolerance” attitudes and policies does not require much imagination. Where G. Stanley Hall wished to nurture youth into compliance with Victorian middle-class propriety, Holt meant to extract compliance and conformity through the raw assertion of adult power.

While Holt’s views clearly differed in the definition, intensity, and degree of control he urged adults to apply to youth, his greater resonance with Hall is apparent but frequently overlooked (see table I.3). Both built their theoretical foundations on nineteenth-century scientific positivism aimed at rationalizing cultural practices. They shared confidence in the capacity of empirical science to identify and implement universal and biological patterns. Both Holt and Hall viewed youth as inherently flawed and unfit for society. They both perceived youth as dangerously susceptible to behaviors closely associated with the great unwashed masses of laborers and immigrants then teeming in American cities as well as to the problems posed, they felt, by the “darker” races and women. Both envisioned youth maturing or successfully “civilized” only with unqualified dependency on adults.

Here again, however, it is important, especially for an analysis of LIS’s vision of YAs, to make significant historical connections. As was true of Locke and Rousseau, both Hall and Holt advanced different strategies to deliver youth into adulthood. They all concentrated their various interventions upon imagining youth in the same way: as inherently, biologically, naturally, different and “other” from adult society. All viewed young people necessarily as a breed apart, as inherently compromised, damaged, and deficient *subadults*.

Holt and Hall differed from each other only in how they proposed to fix or “solve” the problems they assumed were a natural and universal challenge to youth maturation. Ultimately, the innovation they advanced in the late nineteenth century was confidence that they had discovered, respectively, how to “fix” these problems.

Examining these centuries-old concepts and contemporary practice in light of more recent and burgeoning critical theory and scholarship on the history of youth, however,



**TABLE I.3** The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Scientific “Youth”**G. STANLEY HALL AND EMMETT L. HOLT****“FREEDOM AND INTIMACY” MEETS “POWER AND CONTROL”**

- Based theories on nineteenth-century positivism and empirical modernist science
- Claimed to have found universal and biologically determined patterns
- Created visions of youth consistent with similar visions of marginalized populations (Native Americans, women, African Americans, immigrants)
- Focused on only differences of youth compared to adults (white, middle-class adults)

makes it easy to detect the similarities between them.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, LIS has exercised little scrutiny of, or even curiosity about, the service implications of these legacies for daily practice or research.

## **THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A CONTINUING CONSENSUS OF DEFICIT AND DIFFERENCE**

The “success” or “failure” of all these aspirations, to dilute or deflect the presumptive bestial instincts lurking within all youth, remains debatable among historians, policy makers, and youth studies scholars. What has not been interrogated until rather recently, however, is the consensus that impugns such *natural* impulses to youth in the first place.

There has been even less critical commentary on the ways in which institutions like libraries have been enlisted to implement services encrusted with these assumptions.<sup>12</sup> The exercise of institutional authority and adult power (as manifested in the YDIC) continues, viewed as a necessary, rational, and scientific response to exorcising the Manchurian demons threatening to erupt at a moment’s notice in any youth. In connecting this earlier nineteenth-century vision of youth to today, historian Stephen Mintz observed this:

We may cling to the idea in the abstract [that youth is valuable in and of itself], but in practice American culture—oriented toward mastery and control—views childhood as a “project,” in which the young must develop the skills, knowledge, and character traits necessary for adulthood success. . . . Those who cannot adjust are cast adrift. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century and into the present, professionals in youth work closely adhered to this foundational youth-as-breed-apart construction. Clergy, early in the twentieth century, representing the “soft” approach, as it were, advocated training and competitive boxing programs to divert the otherwise presumptive wayward drift of urban boys. Teachers, perhaps ironically, dispensed the “hard” approach through corporal punishment. Other “solutions” to deflect the inherent savage tendencies in youth included the inventions of groups such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Woodcraft Rangers, Campfire Girls, YWCA’s Y-Teens, and a wide variety of extracurricular programs.<sup>14</sup>

While the specific history of an LIS response to YA service since the late nineteenth century remains largely unstudied, libraries did certainly provide services to young people. And while the notion of what constituted “service” varies a great deal, the scant scholarship on historical LIS YA services largely recalls the experiences of children’s librarians as they, chiefly middle-class white women, sought to carve out professional status from within the

institution. For historical treatments of library services provided specifically to YAs, however, we possess even less scholarly analysis.<sup>15</sup>

What evidence we do have about services for YAs points to how it was not until late in the second half of the twentieth century when LIS began to institutionally question the unchanging nature of youth embedded in the universal and ahistorical assumptions promulgated by Hall, Holt, and developmental psychology in general. Indeed, youth practitioners in many fields and various occupations began to see a more varied landscape in which *some* youth adjusted better to adult society than did others.

Professionals responsible for working with youth, those continuing in the “soft” tradition, began to develop an arsenal of programmatic responses and interventions to assist youth. Those continuing in the “hard” tradition, on the other hand, began implementing their own lexicon of age-based municipal injunctions, codes, curfews, and truancy ordinances, among other statutory measures, to punish the others.

Neither approach, however, questioned the core assumption about youth as inherently flawed social beings or the preoccupation with only the differences between youth and idealized adulthood. Some youth were perceived to require merely less supervision to become mature adults while others required more punishment, or programming, to keep them on the straight and narrow.

Thus, as in many domains of rapidly professionalizing youth services (social work, psychology, education, and criminology, among others), librarianship gradually adopted the “youth at risk” and “prevention” discourse to manifest and rationalize their interventions with the youth they feared were walking that razor’s edge between middle-class propriety and the uncivilized abyss.<sup>16</sup>

LIS also adopted this “soft” approach and engineered service techniques, skills, methods, and practices based on that programmatic model. Libraries aligned resources to civilize youth by deploying the cultural weapons at their disposal: an arsenal of moral suasion we might consider as something of a “second curriculum” (one subordinate to school) delivered through the culturally superior claims afforded them through the promotion of literacy, reading, and books, as well as their relatively unchallenged powerful command of library space.

In the latter portion of the nineteenth century, library luminaries such as Frederick Perkins articulated the library’s broad social mission with youth: “while not expressly a school of manners and morals,” the library was “much and closely concerned in maintaining a high standard in both.”<sup>17</sup> Contemporary service, however, continues to parrot the tradition, as William Lukenbill accurately observes: “Understanding this to be a *primary social responsibility*, librarians easily condemned as harmful to youth certain types of literature and other forms of mass entertainment . . . while at the same time supporting only literature judged by them to be of higher cultural value.”<sup>18</sup>

More recently, and particularly since the late 1980s, YA librarians set out to produce their own brand of “at risk” program and service offerings. In partial response to the 1983 U.S. presidential report, “A Nation at Risk,” libraries moved to address the mounting panic about the educational performances of the nation’s young. Here the basic programming model recruited youth, largely to serve as polite audiences for enlightened or even rogue adult presentations (often by librarians themselves), to receive curricular content reminiscent of classroom instruction and bent, as always, toward the preoccupations of adults. Programs sought to help youth stay in school, stay off drugs, get better test scores, eschew violence and gangs, avoid sex, pregnancy, smoking, and, most recently, focus on “learning” and gaining “skills.”<sup>19</sup>



The claims and aspirations embedded in LIS's programmatic assumptions (focus on only the differences between YAs and adults, for example, and the belief that antisocial behaviors in youth are natural) remained obvious and explicit. These assumptions, however, cannot bear up under questioning, especially as evidence documenting actual and unprecedented national levels of academic achievement and behavior revealed how little youth actually are "at risk" (see chapter 12). Kids were not behaving badly. Indeed, as critical youth scholar Mike Males (among growing numbers of others) has been assessing for decades, "It does not seem to matter that the wild scares and save-the-kids remedies do not turn out to be justified by a reasonable examination of information available."<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, evidence proved unpersuasive, indeed irrelevant, to the unfurling youth-at-risk juggernaut. Moreover, LIS exhibited little evidence that it knew very much about producing youth-at-risk programs, knew even less about how to evaluate them, and has never causally linked particular library programming with specific behavior outcomes—good or bad. All this goes largely unremarked upon to this day. What we do know, in the few instances of actual research, is that the field continues to claim far more than it can prove.<sup>21</sup>

Subsequent innovations and changes since the late 1980s witnessed library YA service professionals pledged to another emerging wave of seemingly different but nevertheless borrowed discourse—slightly different discourse; same basic assumptions. During this period, rather than continuing to view youth as at-risk recipients of professional commitments and aspirations, LIS institutionally adopted an intervention paradigm widely known as "youth development," wherein adult experts carefully cultivated, arrayed, and deployed community "assets" so that access to these "building blocks" would guide youth toward maturing as "healthy adults."<sup>22</sup>

As alluded to earlier in reference to the YDIC, the concept of youth development, an innocuous-sounding term, performs as a means to define generally a beneficent process of preparing young people for the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through particular activities and experiences promoting social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies. As with many innocuous-sounding agendas, the particulars remain difficult to pin down by definition or in measurements demonstrating validity.

More to the point in this discussion about LIS's vision of YAs, however, are underlying assumptions about young people, institutions, and society that endure unquestioned decade after decade. Further, this approach is so totalizing and normalized in LIS, so accepted, so unquestioned, that the term "youth development" itself need not even appear in the indexes of the profession's foundational texts and resources even as its hegemonic dominance appears on nearly every page.<sup>23</sup> The youth development paradigm also appears prominent in all of the policy, resource, and aspirational documents advanced by YALSA, the American Library Association's young adult division.<sup>24</sup> In no instance, however, does the concept engage analytical attention or critical contextualization.

Under the youth development approach, LIS practitioners, assumed to be more progressive, pursued a strategy wherein selected youth would play more "participatory" or "partnership" roles in their libraries.<sup>25</sup> Of course, these terms, like youth development itself, serve more as free-floating signifiers by seldom offering clear definition, measurement, or evaluation.

Still, for LIS, youth development represented a rather radical shift. No longer would progressive institutions imagine all youth as "at risk" but, rather, as valuable community "partners" and resources—resources, nevertheless, requiring training in and acquisition of discrete, predetermined, prescriptive priorities, opportunities, and, most especially, "skills."

Libraries subsequently instigated various schema in which some young peoples' participation and involvement were, to varying degrees, actively solicited. This is the era of burgeoning teen advisory groups, teen leadership councils, and other configurations in which small and tentative clusters of selected youth directly engage library staff in various discussions about the delivery of YA services.<sup>26</sup>

While more progressive institutions began to adopt youth development, the transition across LIS moved slowly and unevenly. Indeed, confusion, conflation, and ignorance regarding the ideological transition this paradigm represented remain widespread. One is as likely to encounter libraries deploying the "at risk" approach as those using the youth development paradigm. Some deploy both simultaneously without recognizing the difference.<sup>27</sup>

Those libraries informed by the YDIC agenda attempt to fortify youth with skills and positive attributes.<sup>28</sup> The so-called ideological shift introduced by LIS's growing adoption of the youth development model, however, one ostensibly inverting the youth-at-risk approach's exclusive concentration on preventing negative youth behaviors, bears further examination.<sup>29</sup>

## THE YOUTH CONSENSUS AND "PATH DEPENDENCY"

The key term in LIS's still uneven transition, from the "at risk" model to youth development, however, remains *ostensible*. Because in addition to the ideological patterns cited earlier, the century-old positivist master narrative governing LIS's broad and deeply rooted consensus about youth persists as an overarching conceptualization of young people as defined only through difference from adults and if not dangerous then irreducibly and essentially "other." Youth continue to be envisioned as an entire demographic category forever plagued by crisis, turmoil, need, and difference.

The totality of youth identity remains defined by their universal, essentialized, and troubled difference from adults. Be they viewed as biologically different from adults (Locke and Rousseau); be they undeveloped and uncivilized subadults (Hall and Holt); be they partially or even sporadically damaged ("youth at risk"); or be they lacking the requisite tools and skills to compete in today's economy as thriving mature adults (youth development), youth are nevertheless viewed as living a fundamentally different and marginal experience—one presumably always less-than and ever at odds with normative and idealized adult community. And this "difference" has been interpreted nearly always (as was true historically regarding nonwhites, women, immigrants, and the non-gender conforming) in opposition to and conflict with mainstream society.<sup>30</sup>

It was, after all, G. Stanley Hall's study of youth in the late nineteenth century that characterized youth itself as a phase of "storm and stress" (from the German *Sturm und Drang*) to fuse developmental biology with the social experience of young people. The operative feature of this continuing view assumes that conflict between youth and parents, youth and other adults, youth and authority, radical mood swings, and risk-taking behavior (including latent predilections toward violence and disruptive behaviors) are normal.

As detailed earlier, more recent interpretations envision all youth, during this "storm and stress" conflict mode, in a symmetrical paradox—rendering a view of youth either, sentimentally, as biological innocents (i.e., "It's not their fault; their brains are not yet developed") or as beings consciously imbued with supervolition, -power, and -agency (i.e., "They're dangerous and they make poor choices"). One week it is panic about being victimized by homicidal bullying; the next, assertions rationalizing risk taking due to biological differences (such as the "teen brain" discourse).<sup>31</sup>

After more than a century of these unquestioned assumptions of youth deficiency and less-than status, there is little evidence that LIS even notices these naturalized and essentialized characterizations of youth in today’s popular media, culture, and scholarship.<sup>32</sup> Yet LIS incorporates this consensus seamlessly into instruction, practice, policy, and research.

Thus, as if hopping from one foot to the other, we continue to marginalize and relegate youth within this bifurcated world of false binary opposites: innocent/guilty, immature/adult. In either case, the consistent focus on the inherent and essential deficiencies of youth continues unquestioned.

In beginning to critically evaluate and historicize the operative assumptions at the heart of this continuing consensus, it is useful to ask: In what field of social science or professional practice have universal claims over a century old remained unchallenged? And what consequences ensue when an entire profession continually reproduces and implements those assumptions systematically in daily practice and research? This reaction is reminiscent of Daniel Macallair’s observation of the remarkable resistance to change he found in the institutional history of youth corrections. He characterized the circumstances as “path dependency” in which a traditional practice continues even when more effective alternatives have been identified.<sup>33</sup>

Table I.4 illustrates some of the ways in which the rhetoric on youth discourse plays out in current language.

**TABLE I.4** Contemporary Language Describing Century-Old Assumptions about Youth

RHETORIC OF THE YOUTH CONSENSUS	
Sentimental View of Youth	Youth as Superagents
Innocent	Dangerous
Dutiful	Entitled
Passive	Aggressive
Truthful	Deceitful
Precious	Frenetic
Victim	Perpetrator
Needy	Headstrong
At-risk	Privileged
Asset	Liability
Creative	Unimaginative
Individual	Peer predators
Private/secretive	Exhibitionist
Self-conscious	Calculating
Rudderless	Plotting and cunning
“Gifted”	Underperforming

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