

The Whole Library Handbook

Teen Services

Edited by HEATHER BOOTH and KAREN JENSEN



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Dedication

For Julia and Thora. You've been more patient with me than any parent should expect, and I love you more than you can imagine. Now, let's go play.

—*HB*

To my family. It is because of your sacrifices that I was able to write this, and I dedicate it to you with all my heart.

—*KJ*

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Acknowledgments

From Heather

This book would not exist were it not for the wonderful contributions of the librarians and authors who have shared their words and thoughts on this broad and wonderful topic. We deeply appreciate your involvement and the gift of your knowledge and wisdom that you have shared not just with us, the authors, but with the readership of the book. Every one of the contributions was crafted with care and a great understanding of the subject matter. We are so grateful that you have shared your talents with us, and it was an honor to work with each of you.

We would also like to thank YALSA—a unifying force among teen librarians. Many of the contributors to this book are YALSA members, and our appreciation for the service, leadership, and support this organization gives us is great and genuine. A portion of the royalties from the sale of this book will benefit YALSA.

I was first approached by Stef Zvirin to write and compile this book in 2008, not too long after my first book, *Serving Teens through Readers' Advisory* was published. At the time, I also had a young child, a new job, and enough YALSA committee involvement to keep me on my toes. I put it off until I finally felt ready to tackle it, and Stef patiently waited for the completed proposal until the summer of 2009. I would like to thank Stef for her confidence that I was the right person for the project, even in light of the many delays it has suffered, and for her patience and understanding as I followed this path, and to thank our current editor, Jamie Santoro, for shepherding the project through to its completion.

Life doesn't always move in the direction and timetable we anticipate, and when I found myself with this unfinished project and another new baby, Stef still believed in me and trusted my judgment in bringing Karen Jensen onto the project. When I discovered Karen's professional-development website, *Teen Librarian Toolbox*, I knew I'd found a kindred spirit. Karen joined *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* project at my urging and to my great relief and brought with her a wealth of experience and a strong voice, which I hope readers will find to be confidence-instilling and collegial. I need to thank Karen for her outstanding contributions, friendship, support, and encouragement. This book very well may have crumbled without your enthusiasm, energy, ideas, and camaraderie, and it has been an honor to work with you. Thank you so very much.

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From Karen

When Heather Booth first contacted me and asked me to write a book with her, I didn't realize that I wanted to write a book. It turns out, I really, really did, and I am incredibly thankful to Heather for the opportunity not only to write this book, but for the great conversations about our profession that we had along the way and for the deeply satisfying friendship we formed in the process. She put in

a tremendous amount of time cleaning up my duplications, excessive use of commas, and more. Heather is a rock star to write with, and her teens are very blessed to have her as their librarian.

This book would also not exist if it were not for the contributions of all the other librarians who said yes when we contacted them and asked them to write a piece on some of the topics that we knew they were better writers on than ourselves. They graciously took the time to share their experience and passion to help make sure that we all knew and understood the topics they loved so that teens would receive the quality services that they so richly deserve and desperately need. I am thankful to each and every one of you for answering the call.

My journey as a librarian began sitting Monday mornings in an office talking with an amazing reference librarian named Mary McGavick about the TV show *The X-Files*, and sometimes about librarianship. She became my mentor, and then she became my beloved friend. Every step of the way, she has been there on my journey as a librarian, and who I am today as a librarian is thanks in no small part to her. This book would not be written today if she had not taught me everything she knew, allowed me to disagree with some of it, and answered the phone for 20 years when I had questions to ask, fun stories to share, and tears to shed.

The best part of being a teen services librarian is getting to share this journey with my fellow librarians and the teens who I have been blessed to serve. Each and every one of them have helped me do my small part to make this world a better place, to learn, to grow, and to remember not only what it is to be a teen, but how to embrace every moment—and every person—you encounter in life. I thank them all for the friendship and camaraderie. I have to give special thanks to Sam Norris and to Christie Ross Gibrich for being the best friend and the best fiend, respectively, I could ever dare to ask for.

I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to all my friends and family who have shared this journey with me. I could not have done it without your support.

When we moved for my husband Tim's job in 2011, I desperately feared whether I would be able to find another satisfying job as a teen librarian, which I feel is my life's calling. Heather presented me with this opportunity at a time when I really needed it, and my husband and my family made tremendous sacrifices so that I had the time to research, write, and sometimes rewrite this book. There were nights when the family watched our favorite TV shows without me; when my husband took the kids to Chuck E. Cheese's (alone; the horror!) so I could have a quiet time and place to write; and when we made last-minute changes to plans so I could meet a deadline or take a call related to this project. My husband and two children are amazing in every way, and I thank them for this opportunity. I hope one day my beloved girls will look at this book and think to themselves, "My mom wrote a book, and that means I can dream big and achieve it." It is because of your sacrifices that I was able to write this, and I dedicate it to you with all my heart.

Preface

IN 1991, the first edition of *The Whole Library Handbook* was compiled by George M. Eberhart. Now, more than two decades later, this prize of librarianship has entered its fifth edition, and much has changed. One notable area that has undergone much growth is spaces, collections, and librarians for teens. We hope that *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* is able to fill in some gaps, start some conversations, and ignite some interest in what we consider to be the best job, with the best clientele in the library world.

This book is divided into eight chapters. We begin in Chapter 1 by getting to know our bosses—the teens. Without a good understanding of who we are working for, our best intentions will fall short and our services will never be as successful as they could be.

In Chapter 2, we turn a similarly critical eye on ourselves. We examine the markers for ideal conduct for teen librarians, deal with special circumstances that teen librarians encounter, and discuss how to set a teen librarian up for success.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss services and programs for teens, respectively. Although it may seem that these belong joined in one section, we explain that teen services encompass much more than after-school programs, and programs are a crucial part of any teen services plan.

Moving on to Chapter 5, we address what many think of first when they think of teen services—the collection.

Chapter 6 addresses an important topic that most of us will only learn on the job—and only then if we are lucky. Marketing services to teens is different than marketing library services to adults, and given the structure of many libraries, it is often left up to the sole discretion of the teen librarian.

In Chapter 7 we return to teens, examining what positive, productive teen involvement looks like in the library setting.

And, finally, in Chapter 8, several of the hot-button issues in teen librarianship are discussed.

In many ways, this is a book that will never be complete. Every day, another teen librarian has a brilliant idea, an innovative way of approaching teen services, a shining example of service, a clever use of new resources and technologies, or a new take on an old topic. Every day, new advancements make certain aspects of our jobs less relevant, yet many of these same advancements make aspects of our jobs more exciting and challenging. In light of these changes, we hope that the articles collected here paint a descriptive picture of teen services as they are now, with respect to the past and an eye to how things could be in the future.

*Heather Booth
Western Springs, Illinois*



WHO ARE TEENS?

CHAPTER ONE

Despite its title, this book begins, not with the whole library, but with the whole teen. Before we can move into the Teen Services portion, we really need to consider who we are doing all this for and how the forces acting on teens—their physiological and social development, societal position, and the culture that surrounds them—work to mold these interesting people into the library patrons that we have chosen to work for and with.

It's not uncommon for a new hire or the younger of the librarians on staff to be assigned the task of working with teens in the absence of a structured teen services department or position. But it's folly to believe that the librarian who is still wearing her jeans from college or driving the car he got after high school graduation is always the best choice to work with teens.

We are adults, all of us. We all need to work to acquaint ourselves with the teens in our community and then reacquaint ourselves with the new crop of teens every few years. A teen generation flashes by in the blink of an eye, and what you knew about teens and their culture when you were one—even if it was only a few years ago—has undoubtedly changed. This constant change is part of what makes working with teenagers so challenging—and interesting!

Defining the local teen community

by Heather Booth

IF WE ARE TEEN SERVICES LIBRARIANS, just who are the people we serve? It's not a rhetorical question—the defined group is going to vary depending on the community, and knowing the community in which we work is critical for forming strong programs and services that meet the specific needs of our young patrons. Striking a balance between local and global interests is easier once the community needs are understood. Here are some questions to consider while defining your demographic and structuring your services.

How does the school district, park district, or other community organization divide grades and ages? Knowing how a community defines *teenager* is helpful to a library as it breaks services into age groups, collects age-appropriate material together, and assigns service desks and staff in the right numbers and at the right desks. A community where elementary school ends with 5th grade may define *teen* as slightly younger than those with junior high beginning at 7th grade. One will likely see this reflected in libraries in the difference between juvenile and teen materials.



To assess this, also weigh the following: Are sports leagues splitting kids between 11 and 12, or between 12 and 13? At what age does the park district permit teens to rent a racquetball court or come to teen programs? How are teens in your community accustomed to being grouped together? Consider how this will impact the upper end of your collection as well as how you might dovetail services on the younger end with children's services at your library.

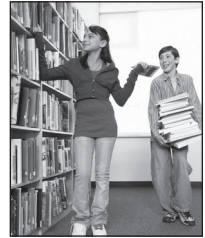
Does the community have many older teens and younger adults? It's commonly acknowledged that teens don't limit their reading to what the publishing world considers YA and that teens are eager and willing to read the right adult-market book, not to mention the burgeoning "New Adult" designation. Knowing what the older teen population is like in a community will lead to improved services, such as collecting paperbacks of adult-market books, creating displays for New Adult titles, or adding books with older YA interest to lists and pathfinders. The information needs of older teens are distinct as well. As schools are increasingly focusing on academic skills and testing, many of the courses that taught young people the basic skills of adulthood, like balancing a checkbook, writing a résumé, or cooking basic meals, have fallen away. Consider whether the public library can fill the gap in circumstances such as these.

Do the majority of graduates move away to colleges or careers outside of the community? How many older teens have dropped out and no longer have access to a school library at all? Is a community college, university, trade school, or the job market an incentive for students to stay at home after high school or for young adults to move into the community? Who is serving recent high school graduates? Although the conventional wisdom dictates that people will frequently abandon the library between school and parenthood, this need not be the case if a teen program attempts to bridge the transition to adulthood, and there are services on the other end in the adult department to catch new arrivals.

How are young people served by libraries in their schools? As school libraries and school librarians suffer in difficult economic times, the community library

can be an important resource if it knows the gaps it needs to fill. Additionally, the local library can be an attractive study destination for commuter students working toward degrees if the library has enough of the right resources. Although even the best-equipped public libraries are no replacement for well-stocked and well-staffed school libraries, any opportunity to help students is a good one, and a teen services department that is aware of the needs and is poised to address them will go a long way in serving its students.

What are the prevailing community sensibilities and issues involving teens and young people? Public libraries are *community* spaces. Collections and spaces are not the librarian's, nor are they the library's. They belong to the community members collectively, and, as such, the sensibilities of the community should, to a certain extent, be reflected in the services and collections. This is not to say that "majority rules," and a public library should be beholden to one viewpoint to the exclusion of others. Rather, the needs and interests of a local community must be considered and balanced with those of the global community when structuring and executing services. Are specific religious groups widely represented? Are many residents recent immigrants? What are the languages most spoken in the home? Are there many teen parents? What issues are local teens facing (parental layoffs, crime, gentrification, environmental changes, academic pressure, etc.)? What is the racial and ethnic diversity of the population? What local groups might make use of teen services at the library? Scouts? 4-H? Confirmants? Job seekers? GED test takers? Homeschoolers? Do most households have computers and internet access? At what age do local teens begin appearing with cell phones? Laptops? E-readers? Knowing who the teens are and what their needs and interests are will help direct the scope and depth of various areas of the collection and services.



Who can get to the library, and how do they get there? Are young people at liberty to find their own way to the library, or are parents generally more involved in their children's after-school hours? Is the library easily accessible to teens on foot? Does public transportation safely and efficiently serve the location? Must teens or their parents drive to the library? Considering how and how often teens are able to access the space may help in the design of pathfinders, signage, and displays, or it may indicate a need for more sweeping adjustments, such as exploring the possibility of bookmobiles, branches, or remote library stations. It will also give a clue as to how much service via proxy will be needed. If parents frequently stop by but the library is less accessible to teens on their own, be prepared to get friendly with some "oldsters."

These questions are only some of the many that we ask while attempting to know our communities. For a librarian who was once a teen in the same hometown in which he or she works, the answers may come more quickly than for one who is a recent transplant across the country, but even if we once knew the community, we need to continually refresh our knowledge. A teen generation is a short one, and the influences that make big waves one year could leave barely a ripple five years later. As our communities change, we best serve them by being abreast of the changes—anticipating them when possible—and responding. Librarians are in the business of receiving questions and giving answers, but when it comes to knowing our teens, the tables must turn. The more questions we ask, the better we are doing our jobs.

SOURCE: Specially prepared for *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* by Heather Booth, teen services librarian, Thomas Ford Memorial Library, Western Springs, Illinois.

What's hot, what's so yesterday, and how to keep up

by Heather Booth

RECENTLY I WAS DRIVING with a teenage cousin. I turned on some music I had bought a few years earlier—new music instead of the *old* stuff that I still listen to from my own teen years. I applauded myself at being a hip young role model for my cousin, still with-it enough that she could relate to me, so unlike her parents and teachers. As we sailed down the highway and the next song came on, the 15-year-old next to me laughed and exclaimed, “Oh! I love this song! I remember listening to it at my babysitter’s house *when I was a kid!*” My heart sank. When she was a kid? How old was this song? How old was *I*?

Time moves faster as we age; and as we grow comfortable with our personal tastes, it’s easy to forget how much new culture is being created and consumed constantly by the teens we work with. As those who have ever been assigned a collection development area they were not personally fond of can attest, you don’t have to love it to do it well, but you do have to know it in the first place. If your personal taste trends more classic or retro than current, you may need to plan a pop-culture education into your week, just like you would update yourself on what this week’s bestsellers are or what is happening in the news. Make a plan and a schedule for yourself, and soon the world of pop culture won’t seem as daunting or foreign as it might now. Here are some resources to help teen librarians stay abreast of current trends and cultural touchpoints that are important to the teens we work with.



New Zealand pop singer Lorde performing in 2014. Photo by Annette Geneva, used CC BY-SA 3.0.

VOYA “Teen Pop Culture Quiz”

Published online (www.voyamagazine.com) bimonthly, the “Teen Pop Culture Quiz” is a quick-and-easy way to pinpoint your teen pop-culture savvy . . . or failings. It addresses contemporary issues, music, movies, and more, and even if you fail the quiz, you’ll be exposed to some names, trends, and concepts that teens are talking about and that are worth knowing.

Watch some TV

You don’t need to watch a lot of TV—but try to catch the CW show you overhear teens dishing about, pop over to Hulu or Netflix to see what is new instead of checking Facebook some afternoon, or use snark to your benefit and watch shows like *The Soup*, *Tosh.0*, or *TMZ on TV*, and get a tongue-in-cheek perspective on media; then go back and figure out what they’re talking about if you don’t know who any of the people are.

Weekly rags

Us Weekly, *People*, and *Entertainment Weekly* are just long enough to pack in a lot of useful tidbits and just short enough to breeze through on a lunch break or bus ride home. Remember: If you don’t recognize the people on the cover, that’s all the more reason to pick it up and find out why.

Surf

Find blogs or news aggregators with a tone you enjoy, and keep up with them, at least weekly. If it's happening anywhere, someone is talking about it online. Follow celebrities and trend makers on Twitter, Instagram, or Tumblr. Read teen-created content like *Rookie* (www.rookiemag.com); read what your teens are reading.

Apps

Load some apps on your mobile device with an eye to what is happening and what is about to happen. *Billboard*, *People*, MTV, *The Soup*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and iTunes movie trailers are all accessible via apps, and they can be browsed as a matter of your morning routine or while you're waiting for your lunch to heat up in the staff lounge. Additionally, keep attuned to new apps that teens may be using to connect with one another and that you might be able to employ in marketing or programming efforts. The YALSAblog (yalsa.ala.org/blog/) frequently posts updates on new apps and features an "App of the Week" column.

Podcasts and radio

Catch up on your commute by tuning in to pop-culture podcasts like NPR's *Pop Culture Happy Hour* or *A.V. Talk* from the *Onion*'s A.V. Club. Or tune in to top-40 radio instead of your usual station and get an earful of what your teens are singing along to this week.

Listen

You don't need to call it eavesdropping if it's for your professional edification! Listen to what the teens are talking about in programs, while lounging in your teen spaces or while waiting for a computer. This is important for two reasons. First, you'll know if they need help, aren't finding the book they need, or are involved in something that you need to intervene with. Second, you can get a straight-from-the-horse's-mouth idea of what interests local teens.

Keeping your focus on your teens will also help hone your pop-culture education. If anime has been done to death and your local teens have moved on to something else, it's handy to know that before delving too deeply into the creation of an anime club, even if that's what it seems everyone else is talking about doing. Just like your collection will reflect local taste and interest, so should your pop-culture offerings.

It would be a well-educated librarian indeed that used all of the above tools on a daily basis, but most people will only need to find what appeals to them, set a method for regular updates, and will be on their way to feeling more connected to teens and their culture and more aware of what is happening in the pop-culture arena. Fortunately, pop culture is inclusive of so many subcultures that there will be something to appeal to nearly everyone. Find what you enjoy and learn more about it. Specializing while staying abreast of the big picture will give you an "in" with local teens who share your new passion.

SOURCE: Specially prepared for *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* by Heather Booth, teen services librarian, Thomas Ford Memorial Library, Western Springs, Illinois.



South Korean girl group After School.
Photo by Kiyoung Kim used CC BY-SA 3.0.

Fast facts for librarians about the teenage brain

by Heather Booth

WE CANNOT EFFECTIVELY create library environments and structures to support teenagers without understanding how their brains work. The differences in teen brain function do not mean that they are deficient; rather, their needs are unique to their age. If we strive to celebrate and work with these qualities rather than trying to force teens into molds better suited to those older or younger, everyone's experience can improve. The library world is far from alone in recognizing the importance of teen brain development. Research on the subject has increased significantly in recent years, and even the Supreme Court of the United States has taken teen brain research into account on major decisions, impacting social policy and leading to a greater understanding of these people who may look like adults from the outside but are very different inside.



For example, in 2010, teen brain development was discussed during the oral arguments in two cases: *Roper v. Simmons*, which abolished the death penalty for juvenile offenders, and *Graham v. Florida*, which prohibited life imprisonment without parole for juvenile offenders, with the exception of murder convictions.

Controlling impulses and managing conflicting information in teens rely mainly on the prefrontal cortex more than the same functions do in the adult brain, which distributes the tasks throughout multiple parts of the brain. According to Laurence Steinberg in "Should the Science of Adolescent Brain Development Inform Public Policy?" *Issues in Science and Technology*, Spring 2012, this lack of distribution partially explains why the tasks are more difficult for teens.

Richard Monastersky writes that the teen brain is more positively responsive to novelty and new experiences than that of a child or an adult ("Who's Minding the Teenage Brain?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 12, 2007).

Teens decipher facial expressions and interpret sarcasm in different parts of their brain than those an adult uses. Use of sarcasm in our conversations with teens or relying on facial expressions to convey our feelings can therefore lead to communication difficulties or misunderstandings. See Dave F. Brown, "The Significance of Congruent Communication in Effective Classroom Management," *Clearing House* 79 (September/October 2005): 13–14.

"Teenagers are far healthier and stronger than children in general, but the overall risk of suffering death, disease, or injury climbs 200% between childhood and late adolescence," Monastersky writes, "in large part because of dangerous behavior, such as drug abuse and unprotected sex." When approached this way, all of the teens who walk through or past the doors of the library, even the best-adjusted, best-supported, smartest, most logical teens, are part of an at-risk population.

Social and emotional functions develop earlier than cognitive and logic-based functions, which may play into the innately social nature of teens. Their group behavior is a normal developmental stage.

Between early and late adolescence, "synaptic pruning" reduces the amount of gray matter in a person's brain by eliminating connections that are unused. New research shows that if these connections are strengthened, a teen's verbal and nonverbal IQ, previously thought to be static, can increase between early and late adolescence. See Sue Ramsden, et al., "Verbal and Non-verbal Intelligence

Changes in the Teenage Brain,” *Nature* 479 (2011): 113–116. When it comes to imprinting on the teen brain—with the usefulness of the library, with technological acumen, with love for words and an openness to literature, with information-seeking behavior—it is quite literally a use-it-or-lose-it situation.

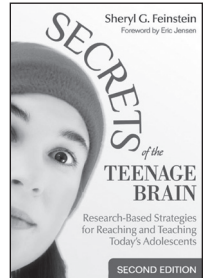
Resources

Sheryl G. Feinstein. *Secrets of the Teenage Brain: Research Based Strategies for Reaching and Teaching Today's Adolescents*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwyn Press, 2nd ed., 2009.

Beth Gallaway. “Pain in the Brain: Teen Library (Mis)Behavior 101.” California Library Association, 2008 Annual Conference. www.slideshare.net/informationgoddess29/pain-in-the-brain-teen-library-misbehavior-presentation.

“Inside the Teenage Brain.” *Frontline*, January 31, 2002. to.pbs.org/1jJbb9u.

Valerie F. Reyna, et al. *The Adolescent Brain: Learning, Reasoning, and Decision Making*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2012.



SOURCE: Specially prepared for *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* by Heather Booth, teen services librarian, Thomas Ford Memorial Library, Western Springs, Illinois.

Teen development: The 40 Developmental Assets

by Karen Jensen and Heather Booth

OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES, the research on adolescent-brain development has grown tremendously. When we find ourselves asking, “What were you thinking?” we can take heart in knowing that teens really and truly do think differently than adults. But knowing the basics of adolescent development and the teenage brain are not enough. We need to be able to apply the physical-development piece to the real lives our teens are living. Fortunately, we have a great tool out there just waiting for all who serve teens to utilize: the 40 Developmental Assets (www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18). This tool enumerates specific qualities that successful teens have. Libraries that use the 40 Assets as they structure programs, services, and philosophies are employing research-based teen-development philosophies.

A brief history

The 40 Developmental Assets are a youth-development program put together and promoted by the Search Institute. Since 1990, the Search Institute, a non-profit organization “devoted to discovering what children and adolescents need to succeed in their families, schools, and communities,” has been using the findings from extensive research to help train organizations that serve youth in the assets to promote positive youth development. To date, more than 2.2 million youngsters have been studied, and the findings demonstrate time and time again that asset building is an important part of youth programming.

The concept behind the 40 Developmental Assets is simple enough. Research has shown that successful teens need to develop the 40 Assets that are outlined. These assets are qualities, both internal and external, that, when present, are more likely to lead to a supported, confident, knowledgeable, goal-oriented, successful teen, who will carry these skills over into his or her adulthood. The more assets teens have, the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviors, such as violence, unhealthy sexual activities, and drug use (though they will probably still like rock and roll). In contrast, research demonstrates that the fewer assets teens have, the more likely they will be to engage in risky behavior.

The 40 Assets distill the various elements that lead to success in adulthood into quantifiable elements that can be cultivated and nurtured during adolescence. Understanding adolescent development is key to serving teens effectively. Who are they? What makes them unique? Then we must take that information and turn it around: How do we take what we know about teens and use that information to serve them effectively?



Teens learn about media literacy at the San Jose (Calif.) Public Library. Photo by Darragh Worland.

This is where the 40 Assets are a teen librarian's best friend. For example, we know that teens tend to be very peer oriented, which means that we should give them opportunities to work together in groups. We can then refer to the assets to see that numbers 15 ("Positive Peer Influence"), and 18 ("Youth Programs") relate directly to this developmental element, and several other assets are tangentially related, such as 3 ("Other Adult Relationships") or 33 ("Interpersonal Confidence"). This means that when we put together library programs and market them, we want to make sure they have built-in opportunities for peer-group interaction and market that opportunity, and do so in the full understanding that these programs are meeting developmental needs that research-based science says will help teens succeed in life.

Assets inside and out

The assets are divided evenly into two lists of 20 assets each: internal and external assets. Internal assets are those values that come from within the teen, and external assets are those that come from the various outside forces in the lives of teens, including family, peers, and community.

Each list is divided into four subcategories that have five assets each. For example, the internal assets list is further divided into "Commitment to Learning," "Positive Values," "Social Competencies," and "Positive Identity." Then, for example, under "Positive Identity," there are more specific assets, such as "has a positive view of their future" and "has a sense of purpose." The external assets are further divided into "Support," "Empowerment," "Boundaries and Expectations," and "Constructive Use of Time." "Empowerment" includes attributes like "youth as resources," wherein teens are given valuable roles in the community, and "service to others." Elements of our teen services, such as teen advisory groups (TAGs) and teen volunteer opportunities, help teens develop these types of assets.

How to use the assets

We know that teens need to develop these 40 assets, so we should use them as a basis for planning and evaluating our teen services in our libraries. Print off the

A closer look at how libraries help teens build assets

Asset: Other Adult Relationships

Description: Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.

Library Connection:

- Library staff provides positive adult interaction to community teens and helps teenagers successfully navigate the library environment.
- Teens who regularly attend library programs develop a positive relationship with the teen services librarian.
- Through readers' advisory and informal book discussions, many regular teens develop a positive relationship with the teen services librarian.

Asset: Caring Neighborhood

Description: Young person experiences caring neighbors.

Library Connection:

- Library resources, especially those designed for teens, communicate that the library cares for teens in the community.

Asset: Community Values Youth

Description: Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.

Library Connection:

- The library provides a developmentally appropriate teen program, including a special teen resource collection, that meets a variety of their needs and interests, which communicates value in the community.

Asset: Youth as Resources

Description: Young people are given useful roles in the community.

Library Connection:

- Through regular interaction with the teen services librarian, both formal and informal, teens give input into programming, services, and the collection. Teen advisory groups and teen volunteer programs are formal ways that libraries can help teens usefully interact.

Asset: Safety

Description: Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Library Connection:

- The library provides a developmentally appropriate, enjoyable environment for teens in their neighborhood.

Asset: Neighborhood Boundaries

Description: Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.

Library Connection:

- The acceptable-behavior policy helps outline responsible behavior for teens in the library. When staff worry about appearing "mean" or "unfriendly" to teens for enforcing behavior policies, remember that doing so meets an asset and is one element of growing a successful adult.

Asset: Adult Role Models

Description: Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.

Library Connection:

- All library staff and the teen services librarian directly model positive, responsible behavior to teens in the community.

Asset: Creative Activities

Description: Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.

A closer look at how libraries help teens build assets (continued)

Library Connection:

- The library's teen services programs provide a variety of opportunities for teens to be creative and engage in self-expression.

Asset: Youth Programs

Description: Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.

Library Connection:

- The library's teen services program offers a variety of programs that provide teens with opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate programming.

Asset: School Engagement

Description: Young person is actively engaged in learning.

Library Connection:

- Libraries have essential resources for teens engaging in learning.

Asset: Homework

Description: Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.

Library Connection:

- Library resources are beneficial in the successful completion of homework.
- Teen spaces in libraries provide a comfortable, secure place in which to complete homework.

Asset: Reading for Pleasure

Description: Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Library Connection:

- Library provides an extensive collection for teens' reading enjoyment.
- Library provides a variety of programs and events that encourage reading for pleasure.
- Readers' advisory services aid teens in locating reading material that they find pleasurable.
- Teen spaces provide a comfortable destination for pleasure reading.

The Asset Shortcut for Staff

In addition to the regular library programming that you do, remind staff that they can be positive adult role models to teens in the library and embody the assets:

- Smile at teens in your library.
- Learn the names of young people and greet them by name when they visit.
- Notice when teens are doing something right. Compliment them and encourage them to continue in that behavior.
- Ask teens to tell you about a good book they read recently.
- Set clear behavior expectations and enforce them consistently.
- Talk and act in ways you want teens to follow.

assets and keep them posted by your desk. Remind yourself of the various things that you do and how they help teens develop assets to become successful adults.

In your planning, ask yourself this very simple question: Does this program, service, thought, or idea help teens develop any of the assets? If the answer is yes, then it has value. One could argue that the more assets an idea meets, the more valuable the idea. If the answer is no, then do we really need to spend our time on the service element?

Assets can also be used in evaluating our library services and in our marketing, and that concept is discussed in those respective chapters. But the bottom line is

that when you meet assets, you are succeeding because you are making a positive difference in the life of teens in your community. For access to the research, the full list of assets, and more information, visit the Search Institute website.

One of the core assets that we meet involves reading for pleasure. Developing a love of learning is a developmental asset, which doesn't surprise us, as we know the value of the written word and the power of the story to change lives. Building diversified collections that engage our teens and promote a love of reading? We have that one in the bag. But it is certainly not the only asset that libraries can help teens meet. Whether we are providing teens with a space to feel valued and a voice by participation in teen advisory groups or teen volunteer programs or providing positive adult interactions through one-on-one encounters at the reference desks, libraries are a vital part of our communities because we help teens build assets.

With an understanding of the 40 Developmental Assets and their role in the lives of teens, libraries can plan, implement, and evaluate their teen services in a different and more effective way.

Additional resources

Karen Jensen. "Mpact: An Asset Builders' Coalition: Working with Community Agencies," *VOYA* 34 (October 2011): 354.

Karen Jensen. "Asset Builders Coalition Support," Teen Librarian Toolbox, October 25, 2011. www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/2011/10/asset-builders-coalition-support.html.

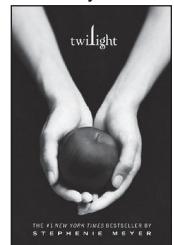
SOURCE: Specially prepared for *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* by Karen Jensen, teen services librarian, Grand Prairie, Texas, and Heather Booth, teen services librarian, Thomas Ford Memorial Library, Western Springs, Illinois.

Reading in the dark: Boys, their books, and the search for answers

by *Eric Devine*

MANY OF MY STUDENTS, particularly boys, have an aversion to reading that is almost incomprehensible to me. Almost. Case in point: I was monitoring detention, and a freshman boy had no homework and no teachers to see for assistance. I asked him what he was reading. He did not understand the question. I called him forward and offered a pass, suggesting he go to the library so that he would not waste the hour. He said, "I don't read." I quietly queried as to whether he had difficulty. He said, "No, I just don't like to." I still sent him to the library. Ten minutes later, the boy returned with a book. I was elated. Then he sat down. It was *Twilight*. He was making a joke. But as I sat there with a dozen authors and titles in my mind—whereas he could not come up with one, or did not care to look—I was unsure who exactly was the butt of his joke.

I constantly review YA titles with a wide range of classes, and often students, boys included, will pick up the books I mention. When they do, invariably they enjoy them. Then they share with each other, and then they ask for more. Therefore, it would *seem* that all schools need



in order to get boy teens to read is a voracious YA reader on staff. Good luck with that. It is increasingly difficult to find pockets within my teaching to allow for “pleasure” reading. I make them, but I cannot imagine the future trending in that direction.

It would seem then that librarians hold a greater responsibility in connecting teens with books, especially the boys. It has been well-documented that boys read less, that they skip YA and jump from middle grade to adult, while girls take the bridge offered and along the way ingrain a love of reading. I spend a great deal of time thinking about the habits of boys and their book selections, or lack thereof. I also talk to them, and their answers to my most recent questions were eye-opening but not shocking. However, there was one conclusion I drew. The summary of the challenge to create more YA boy readers and then adult male readers is this: *To convince boys that the narratives they are currently consuming (video games, YouTube, movies, social media) are not as good as books at providing the insights they need to succeed in life.*

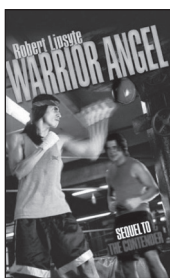
Easy, right? You may continue reading when you have dried the tears from your laughter.

I base this belief on the responses I received from my male students to the four questions below as well as my own research and more than a decade teaching adolescents.



How many books do you read in a year? Please indicate how many fiction and how many nonfiction. The average number of books is around six, with a majority from fiction. However, that number includes boys who read 15–20 books and those who read none. It was surprising that fiction won out, as the common belief is boys need texts that teach them something they can use, and we assume this mostly comes from nonfiction. The concept may be true, but the source is not. Boys still want to learn about life, and they choose to learn from fiction.

What particular genres of fiction and nonfiction do you enjoy reading? The nonfiction selection fell into these camps: biographies, military/war stories, and historical accounts. The fiction ranged the gamut from an overwhelming demand for realistic fiction to affinities for historical fiction, fantasy, zombies, mysteries, the supernatural, and fantasy to a few graphic-novel nods. The military books bled into both genres, which is not a surprise, but the range of fiction was. Boys read all types, but what was most compelling was that in spite of the genre (with the exception of fantasy), the boys wanted realism. They wanted characters they could relate to in settings that were familiar and conflicts in which they could see themselves. Yes, this sounds a lot like how girls select books, doesn't it?



What are the roadblocks to reading in your life? I believe this to be the most illuminating question based on the answers. My school has a predominance of athletes, so “sports” eating up time made sense, but our athletes are, across the board, scholar-athletes, so this does not speak to the slanderous “dumb-jock” mentality. Rather, the demands are real, and our boys must cut somewhere, and books are typically first on the list.

Following sports came a mix of responses that all congealed under two categories: “life” and “story structure.” The boys, when not busy with sports, were busy with friends—in real life or online—had an inability to sit and focus, and would rather be up and doing. Makes perfect sense to me, as being social is normal and enjoyable.

I lumped responses such as “chapter length,” “book length,” “time it takes to read,” and “being a slow reader” under the story-structure response because these all speak to just that. Boys today enjoy quick chapters and fast-paced stories so that they can dip in and out of them and not lose the momentum or have to back-track to remember the plot or characters. I believe any book you can pitch with having chapters that can be read in five to ten minutes is a phenomenal selling point with boys.

What, if anything, should or could be done to get you to read more? The overwhelming yet disturbing response to what could get boys to read more follows: *More books with violence and gore*. Following that, the responses all focused on shorter works with fast-paced plotlines. Overall, the boys had a gross inability to see—in spite of their social-media predilection—that a world of people discussing books exists, where if at minimum, they could at least glean titles, and at maximum, they could join the conversation.

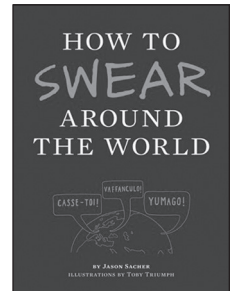
These responses have proven to me that boys want and need to be shown how to live. They do not know how to fully function in this contemporary society. They are unsure of who they are, what they should enjoy, how they should behave, or who to emulate. They are extremely lost in a void where the information they receive is predominantly aimed at entertainment rather than education.

This brings me back to my central premise, which I believe my boys highlighted. The challenge is not simply to get them into the library; it is to get them to incorporate books as a staple to the narrative diet they are already consuming. The challenge is to demonstrate how the ridiculous YouTube clip and the culture of computer-screen passivity is addressed in YA literature—preferably in short chapters. The challenge is to show them how those tweets or the Facebook messages they send are part of a larger conversation that exists in books. That by reading, they can better inform their decisions on what to say and what not to, how to behave and how not to, because others have already walked these roads and have written about them. The challenge is to demonstrate for them the fundamental value of books, not just for books’ sake, but for the sustenance they provide.

Our boys desire more. They just have no clue how to find it and then know if it’s worth their while. They live in a world of unlimited selection, which is wonderful and problematic. How can they know which story is worth the undertaking, which one will help turn them into a better man? Left to their own devices, our boys will make a joke out of reading, most likely out of fear, as did the boy from detention. By doing such they will erode their ability to be more than they are today. That is a shame, and an outcome that cannot be allowed to develop. Yet it is also a situation for which the solution is attainable through a persistent attention to the shifting interests and specific needs of boy readers and potential readers, and continually working to make those vital connections.

For more information on boys and reading, see “Boys and Reading: Is There Any Hope?” by Robert Lipsyte, *New York Times*, August 19, 2011; and Guy Read, www.guysread.com.

SOURCE: Specially prepared for *The Whole Library Handbook: Teen Services* by Eric Devine, young adult fiction author of *Dare Me*, *Tap Out*, and *This Side of Normal*.



Contributors

Amy Alessio has enjoyed the advice of teens in programs for more than 17 years in her work as an award-winning librarian at the Schaumburg (Ill.) Township Library. She has a degree in criminology from the University of Illinois and an MLIS from Dominican University. She reviews teen mysteries for Teenreads.com and *Crimespree Magazine* as well as adult mysteries and romances for *Booklist*. She wrote *Mind-Bending Mysteries and Thrillers for Teens* (ALA Editions, 2014) and coauthored *A Year of Programs for Teens 2* (ALA Editions, 2013) with Kim Patton. Information on her presentations on vintage crafts and cookbooks as well as readers' advisory topics can be found at www.amyalessio.com.

Jeanie Austin received an MLIS from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Jeanie's research interests include the power of and access to information and information sharing in radical political movements, and she provided library services for a juvenile detention center from 2009 until 2013. Jeanie was the previous project coordinator for Mix IT Up!, an IMLS-funded project that recruits traditionally underrepresented students to work with underserved youth in a variety of settings (mixituplis.wordpress.com). Jeanie is currently a teen librarian with Oakland (Calif.) Public Library and a PhD student at UIUC.

Naomi Bates is a teacher librarian at Northwest High School in Justin, Texas. She is an active blogger and tweeter as well as a state and national presenter for libraries, both school and public. She believes that relationships are the foundation to any library and librarian and believes it is the strongest connector of books for teens. She was chosen as one of five librarians for the *SLJ*/Gale Cengage Library Leader program in 2010. She was the recipient of the Texas Computer Educator's Association Library Media Specialist of the Year award 2011 and served as the chair of the Texas Association of School Librarians for the Texas Library Association in 2012. She remains active in her state associations and in promoting national library associations. If you can't find her online, she will be behind a book feeding her other passion.

Erinn Batykefer is cofounder and managing editor of the Library as Incubator Project (www.libraryasincubatorproject.org), a website and social-media network that focuses on libraries as incubators for creativity and the arts. She earned both her MFA in writing and her MLIS from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her first poetry collection, *Allegheny, Monongahela* (Red Hen Press, 2009), won the Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award, and the poem "Pittsburgh as Self-Portrait" was featured on the Pennsylvania Center for the Book's Public Poetry Project broadsides, which were displayed in coffee shops, libraries, and public transit around the state. Erinn's work focuses on social media, community programming and engagement, and library "makerspaces." She was named a 2014 *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker.

Joni Richards Bodart, internationally known as the leading expert on booktalking, is an associate professor at San Jose State University SLIS, where she is in charge of the Youth Librarianship curriculum. Her first booktalking series from H. W. Wilson, the Booktalk! series, is considered to be the standard in the field. She is also the author of *Radical Reads: 101 Edgy Books for Young Adults* and

Radical Reads 2: Working with the Newest Edgy Novels for Teens, both published by Scarecrow Press. She was awarded the 2010 Scholastic Library Publishing Award (formerly the Grolier Award) for lifetime achievement and excellence in youth librarianship, and her most recent book, *They Suck, They Bite, They Eat, They Kill: The Psychological Meaning of Supernatural Monsters in Young Adult Fiction* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2012), analyzes the meaning and uses of supernatural monsters in young adult literature. She is currently working on a companion title, *They Scar, They Hurt, They Hate, They Kill*, on the importance of human monsters (toxic adults or teens) in young adult literature.

Erin Bush has worked with youth as a writing tutor, an alternative school instructor, a school librarian, and currently as a library associate at District of Columbia Public Library in Washington, D.C. Readers' advisory (and especially recommending under-the-radar titles) is her passion, which she shares with readers of YALSA's teen literature blog, The Hub, in the occasional column "Best Books You're Not Reading." In addition to books and libraries, she is interested in alternative learning and can be found on Twitter as @wholenewedu.

Eric Devine is the young adult fiction author of *Dare Me*, *Tap Out*, and *This Side of Normal*. He is also a high school English teacher and education consultant. Eric married his high school sweetheart, and together they are raising two daughters in upstate New York. He is represented by Kate McKean, of the Howard Morhaim Literary Agency. He can be found on Twitter @eric_devine, facebook.com/ericdevineauthor, and at ericdevine.org.

Christie Ross Gibrich has worked with teens since 2001. She holds a BA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and earned her MLS from Texas Woman's University (whose football team is *still* undefeated). She is the senior librarian of the Tony Shotwell Life Center Branch Library, in Grand Prairie, Texas, where she is dedicated to making the library a community center and second home to the tweens, teens, and families in the area. She has been on several committees for YALSA, chaired the Amelia Bloomer Project and the Rainbow List, and has presented at both the Texas Library Association Conference and at the American Library Association Annual Conference. She blogs about anything and everything tween and teen at the Teen Librarian Toolbox.

Francisca Goldsmith has been a librarian for more than 30 years and a book critic for most of that time. She has worked as a reference librarian, teen services coordinator, collection manager, and director of branch services in a variety of library systems, and she has been teaching staff development through the Infopeople Project for more than 10 years. In YALSA, she has served on the inaugural Odyssey Award Committee, the Printz Award Committee, and the Margaret Edwards Award Committee, as well as through two board tenures. She is a frequent contributor to *Booklist* and *School Library Journal*, and she also writes for various other professional journals.

Kelly Milner Halls has spent the past two decades crafting high-interest, well-researched nonfiction for reluctant readers. Tackling topics including dinosaurs, sasquatch, mummies, aliens, ghosts, and others, she has offered credibility and a healthy dose of skepticism to themes popular but mysterious to her target populations. Her books *Albino Animals*, *Tales of the Cryptids*, and *In Search of Sas-*

quatch have all been named YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers. *Albino Animals* and *Wild Dogs* were both Orbis Pictus recommended books. She makes her home in Spokane, Washington, with two daughters, two dogs, two cats, and a five-foot rock iguana named Gigantor.

Justin Hoenke is a teen librarian and video-gaming enthusiast who has written about these subjects for publications such as *Library Journal* and *VOYA* and is a regular contributor for the blog Tame the Web. Justin was a member of the 2010 ALA Emerging Leaders class and was named a *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker in March 2013. Justin is currently the teen librarian at the Chattanooga Public Library in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His professional interests include video gaming in libraries, engaging in teen librarianship, creating local collections, and community building. Follow Justin on Twitter at @justinlibrarian, and read his blog at www.justinthelibrarian.com.

Allison Jenkins has worked with teens since 2005. She holds a degree in English literature from the University of North Texas and earned her MLS from Texas Woman's University. For the past five years, she served as the teen services librarian for the Irving (Tex.) Public Library, where she focused on fostering relationships between teens and young adult authors through author visits and teen programs. She recently became a stay-at-home mom to her son, Chase.

Abby Johnson is the children's manager at the New Albany–Floyd County (Ind.) Public Library, where she has worked since 2009. She has written several articles for the *American Libraries* "Youth Matters" column and contributes monthly to the ALSC Blog. You can find her on the web at abbythelibrarian.com, where she has blogged since 2007.

Gretchen Kolderup is a library evangelist, teen advocate, and self-appointed ambassador for YA literature. She received her bachelor's degree in mathematics from Purdue University and her MLS from Indiana University, was the first teen services librarian at the New Canaan (Conn.) Library, and is now the manager of Young Adult Education and Engagement at the New York Public Library. She was the winner of the 2013 YALSA Volunteer of the Year Award and the 2013 YALSA/ABC-CLIO/Greenwood Service to Young Adults Achievement Award. She blogs at www.librarified.net.

Torrey Maldonado is a veteran New York City teacher. Previously, he trained schools to implement mediation programs through the U.S.'s largest victim-services agency. He earned degrees from Vassar and Baruch in sociology and educational administration. Picturing a *Tweens and Teens Conflict-Resolution Manual*, he instead penned a cross-cataloged middle-grade and YA title, *Secret Saturdays*, that the ALA put on its "Quick Picks" and 2013 "Attracting Reluctant Male Readers" book lists. *Secret Saturdays* also was voted the "National Night Out against Violence" book and showcased at New York City librarian conferences for its Common Core State Standards alignment. Learn more about Torrey's efforts in education and literacy at www.torreymaldonado.com.

Casey Rawson is currently a doctoral student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she earned an MSLS in 2011. She also holds an MAT in middle-grades educa-

tion from the University of Louisville and is a former 6th- and 7th-grade science teacher. Her research interests focus on how school librarians can collaborate effectively with teachers in STEM content areas. She has also worked on projects related to diversity in young adult literature, the literacy needs of African American male youth, portrayals of scientists in children's picture books, and gender schemas and IT career choices.

Margaret Redrup-May is a professional librarian with more than 25 years' experience working in a variety of libraries, including school, technical and further education, academic, and public libraries. Margaret's real love in the profession is the public library, where variety is the spice of life, with an interesting mix of customers, resources, and programming. She holds a number of degrees, in education, librarianship, religions, and human-resource management, which either makes her an interesting pub conversationalist or a great singer. Margaret is currently the outreach programs coordinator at Blacktown City Libraries in New South Wales, Australia, serving a very large local government area (where 1 in 70 Australians live). Her team is responsible for children, youth, multicultural, adult, and promotional services within the library service.

Debbie Reese has a doctorate in education from the University of Illinois and is completing an MLIS at San Jose State University. A founder of the Native American House and American Indian studies program at the University of Illinois, she taught American Indian teens at two American Indian boarding schools and is the editor and publisher of the web-based resource, *American Indians in Children's Literature* (americanindiansinchildrensliterature.net). Her chapters and articles have appeared in books and journals used in education and library science. She is tribally enrolled at Nambé Pueblo, New Mexico.

Maggie Hommel Thomann is the reader services manager at the Park Ridge (Ill.) Public Library, where she previously served as young adult librarian. She has worked with youth in various roles, including as a librarian, workshop leader, and instructor at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development. She is especially interested in teaching teens about new media and technology that they can use in creative ways. She received her MLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has written for the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, *VOYA*, and *School Library Monthly*.

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Kristin Treviño is a teen services librarian at the Irving (Tex.) Public Library, coordinating YA collection development, programming, and author visits. She received her bachelor's in history from the University of Texas at Arlington and an MLS from the University of North Texas. If you can manage to peek past the massive stacks of books, journals, notebooks, and papers on her desk, you will usually find Kristin designing a new teen book list or bookmark while plotting yet another author visit.

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