

Analyzing a Teen Area

Before making any changes or additions to a teen area, make a *complete inventory* as well as a list of *pluses* and *minuses* of the space. Keep in mind...there are always pluses, regardless of how dismal things might seem. For example, positives might be "strong collection with lots of materials to choose from" or "good floor plan," while negatives might be "collection needs weeding" or "no comfortable seating."

To better assist you, a complete inventory checklist can be found in *Teen Spaces: The Step-by-Step Library Makeover* by Kimberly Bolan Taney (ALA Editions, 2003). In the meantime, here are some *quick* and *easy* questions to consider in your initial analysis:

Floor plan / Layout / Location

- How much floor space is devoted to teens & how does it relate to the square footage of the entire library?
- Is the floor plan adaptable with room for experimentation?
- Where is the teen area in relationship to other departments and the front entrance of the library?
- Can teens be social without disturbing other patrons? Are there good site lines to staff areas?

Furniture

- What furniture is available?
- Is there comfortable seating?
- What types of tables and chairs are offered for group seating?
- How many people can be seated in the teen area simultaneously?

Fixtures (i.e., shelves, paperback spinner racks, signage)

- Are fixtures "make do" or truly functional?
- How can fixtures enhance the teen area's look, effectiveness, and promotion?
- Can and do signs get you to where you want to be?
- What kind of lighting is used?

Collection(s)

- How large is the selection and variety of teen and teen-related materials?
- Are materials attractive or worn, fresh or faded-looking?
- Are there several formats offered in or near the teen area (i.e., not just books)?
- Are materials grouped by genre or designated by a spine label (e.g., horror, science fiction)?

Displays

- How are teens exposed to *all* teen-related library materials?
- Are specific thematic displays used? Are they age-appropriate?
- Is face-out merchandising or any other merchandising techniques used?
- Are walls, support pillars, and ceilings used effectively?

Technology

- Are there computers with the online catalog, Internet access, online databases, etc. in or near the teen area?
- Are personal computers available to teens for word processing?
- Is there any other form of technology for teens (i.e. listening stations, stereo system, TV, etc.)?

Staffing

- Where can a teenager find assistance? Is there reference assistance within or close to the teen area?
- Are staff members friendly, receptive and helpful to teen patrons? Is there a staff member who specializes in teen or youth services?

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