

CASE STUDIES: REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES OF HOW LIBRARIES ARE RE-ENVISIONING TEEN SERVICES

Connecting with Teens Through Personal Interests

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What Did You Want to Achieve?

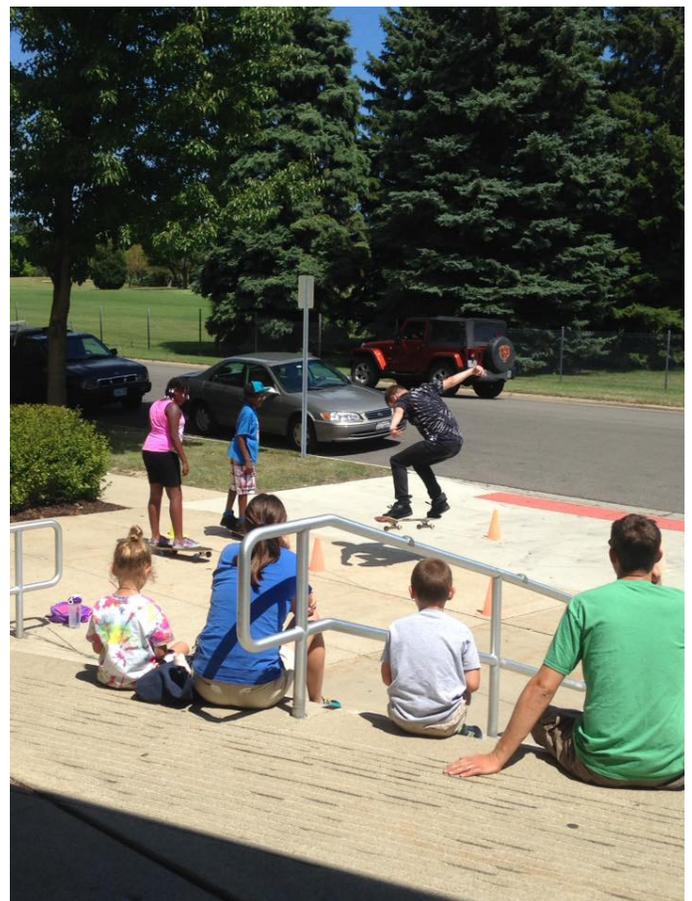
Bikes and skateboards are how the teens in the Zion-Benton Public Library community get around. Through hands-on demonstrations teens gained a deeper understanding about the mechanics of their bikes and skateboards and how they work. By exposing them to this information, we looked to empower teens with the tools to maintain their own transportation methods, putting them in control and reducing future maintenance costs. We also wanted teens to see us as a resource for all their needs, including athletics and transportation.

Overview of the Program/Project

The Zion-Benton Public Library is situated in an economically disadvantaged community. Most of the teen population relies heavily on their bikes as their main method of transportation. In order to support teen needs and interests related to their mode of transportation, we hosted a series of programs about bike repair and maintenance.

For our first program we partnered with our local bike shop. In this program teens learned the basics of patching and changing a flat, fixing a popped chain, and bike maintenance tricks. We finished the program with a professional stunt team BMX demonstration. Teens really enjoyed seeing professional bikers perform. Following the performance the team welcomed participants conversation about their work and bikes.

For our second program we invited a local sports academy to lead a skateboard workshop. The instructors worked with teens to show them how to use a skateboard, perform basic tricks, and maintain their boards. This program was also an opportunity to highlight library nonfiction materials related to the program focus.



What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

Effective outreach has historically been an issue for our library. We realized very early on that we needed to be present where our teens were, which is in the schools. By utilizing the support of teachers and school staff, we were able to spread the word about our workshops and resources better than if we tried to do it simply from within our building.

Another issue we face is pushing through the stereotype of a library as a quiet place where patrons only read books or use the computer. Our library has dramatically evolved over the past few years, and our community is still catching up. By continuing to offer programs that veer outside of meeting strictly reading-related needs, we have seen members of our community, namely teens, using our library to connect to their interests.

What Did You Learn?

After our BMX stunt performance we noticed that many attendees went up to talk to the bikers. This opportunity to connect with an adult role model was important to the success of the program. We want to continue offering these opportunities for teens to connect to the outside world through positive adult mentorship.

How Does This Work Connect to YALSA's Futures Report and Vision?

Partnering with local businesses connected teens to the wider community and allowed them to engage with other adult mentors and educators. Positive adult interactions provide teens with a vision and context for their future. Also, the Teen Services staff at the Zion-Benton Public Library use the connected learning model to structure and guide our programming, specifically when it comes to library staff serving as connectors between teens and learning. By hosting programs that support the engagement and growth of our teens, we empower them to take charge of their future; having the skills necessary to maintain their own bikes and skateboards ensures their independence. Through these programs, we hoped to make our teen population aware of the types of programs and services that we offer. Programs that not only meet the needs of our 21st century teens, but programs that provide the assistance and learning they need to be successful adults. Sometimes that can be as simple as learning how to fix your own bike or skateboard.

