

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Annual Conference, San Francisco
June 26 – 30, 2015**

Topic: Research Agenda Update

Background: As part of their 2014 - 2015 task list, the Research Committee was asked to update YALSA's National Research Agenda with particular emphasis on aligning the document to the principles in the Futures Report. The document was last updated in 2011. Stephanie Barta, the committee chair, has provided a draft of the updated document for the Board's consideration. The Board will want to decide if the changes are acceptable as is, or if the document needs further refining.

Action Required: Action

Questions for discussion (since this is the first draft of the update, please avoid focusing on wordsmithing issues and instead look at the overall meaning and context of the content)

- Does this version do a thorough job of incorporating the principles in the Futures Report? If not, what areas need improvement?
- Are the four priority areas still relevant? Should any be added or deleted?
- Does this document do a successful job of aligning with other YALSA guidelines, position papers, etc.? Is there any unnecessary overlap? If so, what?
- Does this document do a successful job of incorporating/making appropriate mention of other YALSA guidelines, statements, etc.? If not, what should be added?

Additional Resources

- Futures Report www.ala.org/yaforum/project-report
- YALSA guidelines can be found at www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines

Acknowledgements

YALSA's Board of Directors would like to thank the ~~2010 – 2011 and 2011 – 2012~~2014 - 2015 Research Committees for the hard work and dedication they put forth when ~~developing~~-updating this agenda.

Introduction

YALSA is committed to taking a leadership role in promoting research areas of young adult library services: "YALSA is a recognized source for access to targeted research benefitting members and the library community."

The mission of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) is to expand and strengthen library services for teens and young adults. Through its member-driven advocacy, research, and professional development initiatives, YALSA builds the capacity of libraries and librarians to engage, serve, and empower teens and young adults. YALSA is a subspecialty of the American Library Association, the world's largest and oldest library organization, and a financial stable 501(c)3 not-for-profit. In order to achieve their mission the association:

- 1. Advocates the young adult's right to free and equal access to materials and services, and assists librarians in handling problems of such access.
- 2. Evaluates and promotes materials of interest to adolescents through special services, programs and publications, except for those materials designed specifically for curriculum use.
- 3. Identifies research needs related to young adult service and communicates those needs to the library academic community in order to activate research projects.
- 4. Stimulates and promotes the development of librarians and other staff working with young adults through formal and continuing education.
- 5. Stimulates and promotes the expansion of young adult service among professional associations and agencies at all levels.
- 6. Represents the interests of librarians and staff working with young adults to all relevant agencies, governmental or private, and industries that serve young adults as clients or consumers.
- 7. Creates and maintains communication links with other units of ALA whose developments affect service to young adults.

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*This document looks at the intersection of two YALSA items, *Future of Library Services for and with Teens: a Call to Action* and the *National Research Agenda on Libraries*.*

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In 2008 YALSA made a commitment to taking a leadership role in the area of young adult library services research with a strategic plan goal that reads, "YALSA is a recognized source for access to targeted research benefiting members and the library community." The association worked to meet the goal with the launch in 2010 of a new open source, peer-reviewed research journal, *The Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults*. This research agenda is another step in fulfilling the goals in the association's strategic plan.

YALSA's last research agenda was published in 1994. Since that time the landscape of young adult services in libraries has changed quite dramatically. New technologies now make up a foundational piece of initiatives for teens in all areas of library service from

programs to collections and from information literacy to outreach. As the technologies young adults use to access materials and library services change and expand, those serving teens need to acquire an understanding of what these technologies mean for adolescent development, success in school, and literacy acquisition. Research in areas of digital literacy, information-seeking behaviors, social media use and youth development, along with an understanding of how teens learn in both informal and formal learning environments, is required in order to guarantee that young adult librarians can effectively serve teens in the 21st century.

Not only are the tools teens use to access library materials and services expanding, so too are the number of materials published for the age group each year. Associated with this growth is an increase in the formats available. Graphic materials along with digital content are now a part of a teen's and a library's collection. With this rise in the number of materials and formats, librarians serving teens must continue to hone their skills in order to understand how to match the right item to the right teen. Understanding the ways in which teens relate to reading material and the formats in which that material are available, is required in order to serve the young adult population successfully.

A key component of successful young adult library services is the ability to advocate for a strong program. Strength in a young adult program requires adequate funding and staffing, along with up-to-date collections, and ongoing continuing education of staff. An important tool in one's ability to advocate for these is access to up-to-date data that demonstrates the value of a high-quality library program to young adults and describes how a commitment to such a program provides a high return on investment, demonstrated by literate and successful young adults.

With this information in mind, the Research Committee has identified four priority areas for research and action:

1. Impact of library services: Teens make up a significant portion of library users
2. Reading and resources: Teens' literacy needs are evolving with new technologies
3. Information seeking behaviors and needs: Teens are entering the workforce without critical skills
4. Learning environments: Library services and resources for teens are in jeopardy

Additionally, the following aspects of young adult services apply across all priority areas:

- issues related to technology
- issues related to traditional and digital literacies including information literacy
- issues related to diversity

Purpose of the YALSA Research Agenda and Future of Library Services for and with Teens: a Call to Action

The YALSA Research Agenda was developed by members of the association's Research Committee. This group of ~~library science~~ educators, working in graduate schools of library science and Education across the United States, surveyed the field to determine *gaps in research* and determine *the questions* that needed to be answered in order to fill those gaps. The research called for in this agenda will help guarantee that librarians serving young adults are able to provide the best service possible as well as advocate for funding and support in order to ensure that teens are served effectively by their libraries.

The authors of the 2010 agenda focused on four priority areas for research: impact of library services, reading and resources, information seeking behaviors and needs, and informal and formal learning environments and young adults. In addition, certain aspects of young adult services apply across all four priority areas: issues related to cognitive, emotional, and physical development; issues related to intellectual freedom; issues related to technology; and issues related to traditional and digital literacies, including information literacy.

With funding from a 2012 Grant awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, YALSA held a national forum "The Future of Library Services to Young Adults: A Call to Action" which provided an opportunity for the library community and other youth development organizations to engage in a conversation about how the library community can better meet the needs of adolescents in a time of diminishing resources and rapid demographic and technological change.

The outcome of the forum is a call to action for the library community. By acting on this call, the library community can work within their own local communities to create the kind of spaces, service and opportunities that today's teens need in order to succeed in school and in life. Here are just a few examples of new issues highlighted by the "Call to Action" that are incorporated into the new Research Agenda:

- How new technologies and social media affect for information-seeking behaviors
- What these technologies mean for adolescent development, success in school and literacy acquisition and the access gap
- How teens learn formally and informally across multiple literacies
- How teens find and relate to reading materials and formats
- How to find the right items for the right teen
- How to advocate for strong program (adequate funding; current collection, continual staff development)

- [How to ensure cultural competencies](#)
- [What tools are needed to develop flexible learning environments](#)

Please note that the division within the American Library Association with the authority to develop national guidelines, standards, agendas, etc. for school libraries is the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). For information regarding AASL's priority areas for research, visit www.ala.org/aasl. From there you can also access AASL's research-focused journal, *School Library Media Research*.

National Research Agenda

Priority Area 1: Impact of Libraries on Young Adults

Description/Summary of Topic

In order to advocate for and support high-quality young adult services in public libraries, librarians, administrators and policy makers need to have access to current data that speaks to the impact of the library program on adolescent development, literacy, college and work readiness, and so on. However, while there are many venues, from professional literature to social media, for those serving young adults to learn about best practices, there is very little data on the current status of young adult services, including staffing, budgets, collections, programs, and so on. Data is also lacking on the role of young adult library services within the overall library program or its impact on communities. It is this lack of data that priority 1 of the research agenda addresses.

In their 2007 study, the Public Library Association found that only 51 percent of public libraries have a full-time young adult services librarian. Sixty-two percent of these libraries have at least one staff person whose job it is specifically to serve teens. [The 2012 Public Library Data Services study found that only one third of the libraries that responded had one librarian dedicated to teen services \(Agosto, 2013, p. 13\)](#). These numbers are important to know, but they do not supply important information on any correlation between a full-time young adult services librarian and adolescent development or literacy skills. Making the connection through up-to-date statistics is key to a librarian's ability to advocate for higher levels of staffing for teens in libraries.

Specific corollary data is also missing when it comes to library programs for young adults and the impact they have on literacy skills, asset development (such as those articulated by [tools such as the Generic Learning Outcomes, Readiness Abilities Map or the Search Institute in the 40 Developmental Assets document](#)), and post high-school readiness. Librarians who would like to expand their programs and/or gain support for a

summer reading program, and extend technology-based programs need information on how programmatic library activities have a positive impact on young adults.

Data is also not available on how training for professional young adult services librarians helps to guarantee that the young adult library program is valuable and to meet the educational, informational, and recreational needs of young adults. Without statistics that demonstrate that a professionally trained young adult services librarian adds value to a community, it is difficult to advocate for inclusion of that type of position in a library's budget.

There is also a growing gap between “the progressive use of digital media outside of the classroom, and the no-frills offerings of most public schools that educate our most vulnerable populations. This gap contributes to widespread alienation from educational institutions, particularly for non-dominant youth” (Braun et al., 2014, p. 9). There is insufficient empirical data to show how young adult librarians might utilize the connected learning model of youth engagement to bridge different spheres of learning among teens—peer culture, interests and academic subjects—to better support interest-driven and meaningful learning in ways that take advantage of the democratizing potential of digital networks and online resources. In short, more research is needed to demonstrate the impact of young adult librarians' ability to leverage teens' different spheres of learning in constructing library services and programs on teens' traditional literacy achievement.

As there is currently not a high level of statistical data related to young adult services and their impact on teens educationally and developmentally, this area of the YALSA Research Agenda seeks to expand librarian's and community member's abilities to advocate for well-rounded and well-staffed young adult services.

Research Questions

1. In difficult economic times anecdotal evidence suggests that one of the first areas of library service that is cut is service to young adults. This has an impact on the ability of a library to provide staffing, space, collections, and services to the age group, which can then have an impact on the development and literacy skills of the age group and have unintended effects that reach into the community.
 - a. What are the prevalent staffing models for public library service to young adults and how do these current models demonstrate successful support of teens within a community?
 - b. How are young adult services in public libraries supported fiscally?
 - c. Are budgets for young adult library services positively comparable with budgets for other departments within the library?

- d. What is the correlation between a professionally staffed young adult library department with a fiscally strong young adult budget for programs, services, and collections and acquisition of 21st century literacy skills and adolescent development?
2. When a library has a young adult program in place, benefits to the teen population, and ultimately the community, are demonstrated in a variety of ways. An understanding of these benefits can help librarians to advocate for an increase in funding and support for services.
 - a. In what ways do libraries have a positive impact on adolescent development?
 - b. Does library card ownership have an impact on literacies, work readiness, and college readiness?
 - c. Is there a measurable difference in college readiness between young adults who are library users and those that are non-library users?
 - d. How are young adult ~~literacy-literacies~~ skills supported and enhanced through the use of libraries?
 - e. What impact does a full-time dedicated young adult services librarian have on teen literacy and college and work readiness?
 - f. Do communities with libraries that have a strong young adult services program also see a reduced rate in negative community indicators such as school truancy, juvenile crime and drop-out rates?
 - g. What impact does a designated “teen space” and friendliness toward young adults in the entire library space have on teen literacy, college-readiness, and work readiness?
 - f.
3. The skills and knowledge of young adult staff varies greatly from library to library, as does the ability of librarians to keep their skills current as they continue to work in the field.
 - a. How do the skills and knowledge that a professionally trained young adult librarian brings to a library have an impact on adolescent development and ~~literacy-literacies~~ acquisition?
 - b. Taking into consideration such factors as the increasing diversity of the teen population as well as rapid changes in information technologies, what are the most important skills and knowledge young adult services librarians need to have when entering the field?
 - c. What are the challenges young adult services librarians face in skill development while working as a practicing librarian?
 - d. How do those serving young adults in libraries keep up in order to better serve teens in their communities?

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4. National organizations such as YALSA sponsor a variety of initiatives that are geared to improving young adult literacies, college and work preparedness, and the safe and smart use of current technologies. Data on the ways these initiatives support young adult development can be useful in librarian's ability to market the programs within a community.
 - a. What impact do programs such as YALSA's Teen Read Week™ have on young adult text-based literacy skills?
 - b. What impact do programs such as YALSA's Teen Tech Week™ have on the acquisition of 21st century learning skills by young adults?
 - c. What value do young adult focused national initiatives have on the ability of librarians serving young adults to provide high-quality services to the age group?

5. If all libraries serving teens want to more effectively serve today's "connected" teen and demonstrate value to the community, they must ramp up engagement in areas beyond academic or formal learning, and make this engagement visible to teens, their families, and the community. It is not enough to merely use the tools that adolescents are using—the Internet, social networks, and mobile devices. Libraries need to embrace the connected learning model and recognize that they must do more to engage teens via the library's technology presence and services (Braun, et al. 2014). The connected learning model posits that by focusing educational attention on the links between different spheres of learning—peer culture, interests and academic subjects—we can better support interest-driven and meaningful learning in ways that take advantage of the democratizing potential of digital networks and online resources. (Braun et al., 2014, p. 8)

5. What are the possible intersections between youth peer culture, interests, and academic subjects that YA librarians can use to build meaningful learning among youth that take advantage of both the library's and the communities existing resources (virtual, human capital, community, etc)?

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Priority Area 2: Young Adult Reading and Resources

The research on resources for young adults and young adult reading practices falls into three broad areas: resources, reading literacies, and library services. The young adult population continues to grow more diverse in terms of race, language, culture, gender expression, socio-economic class, religion, and abilities. Along with these demographic shifts have come changes in our understanding of the library's resources and services, as well as our understanding of literacy. In the area of resources, both fiction and nonfiction continue to be popular among young adult readers. Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of formats, including print books, graphic novels, e-books, audio books, magazines, and websites. In addition, a number of themes have emerged, in both fiction and nonfiction, related to our increasingly multicultural society—for example, gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, and differing abilities. In the area of resources, libraries serving young adults are now encouraged to take a broader view of their collection to include not only print and digital text and audiovisual resources but also non-traditional materials such as user- or community-created content, physical objects such as crafting or making supplies, and community resources including skilled people. Across all formats, these resources should reflect the diversity of the local and global community and the needs and preferences of local young adults. Eliza Dresang's Radical Change Theory (Dresang, 1999) provides a useful framework for considering developing trends in formats and themes. Radical Change Theory posits three types of changes: Type I is changing forms and formats, Type II is changing perspectives, and Type III is changing boundaries (i.e., what is considered "appropriate" for young adult readers).

The second major area of research, young adult literacy, has also broadened in recent years as our understanding of "literacy" has evolved to encompass multiple and critical literacies - reading, writing, and interacting across multiple representations of meaning, formats, and tools. In addition to traditional questions involving reading abilities and behaviors, researchers are now asking questions about young adults' abilities and behaviors related to information literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, critical literacy, and more. Many of these studies employ the Connected Learning framework, a socially-embedded, interest-driven model of learning that focuses on the intersections among peer culture, academics, and interests. New Literacy Studies (NLS) is another framework that can be used as a foundation for these studies.

The second major area of research, young adult reading practices, involves a number of key issues related to both reading ability and reading behaviors. Educators and researchers are rightly concerned about low literacy levels, reluctant readers, and the differences in literacy skills between ethnic, racial, and socio-economic populations as seen in testing scores and college readiness. There is interest in improving literacy learning and in using the tenets of New Literacy Studies to go beyond the skill levels and practices of the individual reader and focus on the social and cultural context(s) for reading and writing. There is also great interest in what young adults are reading (and are not reading), and how changes in forms and formats may be affecting what and how they read. New advances in brain science research offer promising insights into the connections between brain development and reading behaviors.

The third area of research is related to how libraries can develop collections and services that will foster reading literacies development among young adults. Various approaches can be used to promote interest in and facility with reading multiple literacies, including the use of literary theory as a tool for analyzing texts and the promotion of critical literacy as a way of focusing on the social forces that influence the creation and interpretation of texts. Programs that can address young adults' developmental and information needs are of particular interest, and range from readers' advisory and summer reading programs to Free Voluntary Reading and bibliotherapy. For traditional literacy (reading and writing printed text), these approaches include the use of literary theory as a tool for analyzing texts and the promotion of critical literacy as a way of focusing on the social forces that influence the creation and interpretation of texts. For other forms of literacy, the connected learning framework has been used to develop library programs and services that address and reflect the multiple ways in which young adults access, evaluate, use, and remix information. A number of critical theories (for example, critical race theory) exist that can help frame research focusing on library services for and with diverse and/or marginalized young adults.

Questions for Research

1. How are resources for young adults changing to address the informational, recreational, and developmental needs of diverse 21st-century young adults?
 - a. How are forms and formats changing and what is the impact of these changes on literacies of young adults?
 - a-b. What is the role and impact of non-traditional library resources (apps, people, user-created content, etc.) in school and public libraries serving young adults, and how can librarians effectively evaluate and maintain these collections?
 - b-c. To what extent are new and multiple perspectives being represented?

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- e.d. _____ What themes and topics are emerging?
- d.e. _____ To what extent does the current body of young adult **literature materials** adequately meet the needs of today's diverse teens?
- 2. How are young adults' **reading-literacies** skills and behaviors changing?
 - a. How can librarians help students develop multiple, critical and digital literacies, creating new ways of interaction and thinking?
 - a.b. _____ To what extent are reading behaviors changing in response to the proliferation of formats (especially digital formats)?
 - b.c. _____ How can the reading skills of low literacy young adults, English language learners, and reluctant readers be enhanced?
 - d. _____ How can new advances in brain science research be applied to promoting reading skills and enhancing reading pleasure among young adults?
 - e.e. _____ How can the Connected Learning model be effectively employed in school and public libraries to develop meaningful and powerful literacies instruction?
- 3. How can librarians best **promote-readingprovide services** to address the informational, recreational, and developmental needs of young adults?
 - a. How can librarians develop collections that will best address the informational, recreational, and developmental needs of young adults?
 - b. What programs represent best practices in promoting **reading-multiple literacies** among young adults?
 - c. _____ How can librarians best insure access to a variety of materials for young adults in the face of challenges to intellectual freedom?
 - e.d. _____ How can librarians make a variety of formats and tools accessible and usable despite socioeconomic and knowledge gaps among young adults?

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Priority Area 3: Information Seeking Behaviors and Needs of Young Adults

Description/Summary of Topic

In the introduction to *Youth Information-Seeking Behavior II: Contexts, Theories, Models, and Issues* (Chelton & Cool, 2007), Anthony Bernier (2007) challenges the LIS research community to expand the current research on information seeking to include more research specifically focused on the needs and behaviors of young adults. As he

correctly states, the vast majority of information seeking research continues to focus on the needs and behaviors of children. He notes that while many researchers have attempted to “stretch their theoretical formulations across wide boundaries, the results frequently stretch beyond where we know it should go, beyond developmentally significant frontiers” (p. xviii).

Bernier (2007) outlines a number of areas needing increased attention by the scholarly community, including:

1. *The everyday life information wants, concerns and needs of young adults.* Much of the information seeking that teens engage in is not related to school work, but instead focuses on “real life” or “daily life” issues (p. xvii), yet much of the research continues to focus on young adults as students.
2. *The impact of social contexts on the information seeking needs and behaviors of adolescents.* Information seeking needs and behaviors are embedded in social contexts and factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, and home language impact the information seeking behaviors of teens. The social nature of teens themselves also affects their information needs, wants, and concerns, as well as how they seek information. To best meet the needs of young adults, librarians must have an understanding of how social contexts shape and affect information seeking.
3. *The barriers which exist that prevent or limit the information seeking behavior of today’s teens.* In researching barriers, The library community needs to not just examine traditional barriers such as access to technology, but to also look at itself and how library policies, librarians’ perceptions of teens, pedagogical approaches, and so forth impact the information seeking behavior of young adults.
4. *The many forms of young adult literacy and how they are informed, shaped, and impacted by technology, especially social networking tools.* “The current research agenda would be well served by dramatically expanding the scope of what it counts as information gathering, of literacy tasks, and what mental labor qualifies as ‘information behavior’” (p. xiv).
5. *The role of young adults as creators and producers of information.* “The nation is at the beginning of a revolution in youth-produced media, yet current scholarship eclipses any view that young people are increasingly producers of information” (p. xvii).

We must also begin to research the information needs of young adults and how they desire that information delivered. Denise Agosto (2011) identifies categories of information needs of Young Adults:

- peer, family, and other relationships

- [popular culture](#)
- [emotional needs](#)
- [physical health and safety](#)
- [emerging sexuality](#)
- [consumer needs](#)
- [academics](#)
- [leisure activities and interests](#)
- [careers](#)
- [college](#)

[Agosto \(2011\)](#) also cites the following barriers for adolescents:

- [lack of source knowledge](#)
- [background and contextual knowledge deficiencies](#)
- [negative perceptions of libraries and librarians](#)
- [information avoidance](#)
- [embarrassment and social unease](#)
- [use restrictions by parents/guardians, schools, or libraries](#)
- [access issues](#)
- [information overload](#)

[With both these needs and barriers in mind, The-the](#) research questions proposed below have the goal of enabling the library community to remain responsive to the needs of teens, to enjoy “better and richer relationships with young people than we ever have before” (p. xxvi).

Questions for Research

1. Beyond the education community’s agenda to advance curricular goals and beyond the library community’s goals connected to “information literacy skills,” how do young adults themselves enact, create, and produce literacies?
 - a. What “literacy assets” (not simply deficits) do they develop on their own—individually and collectively?
 - b. How do young adults create community with these “literacy assets?”
 - c. How have these new literacy assets and skills changed the way librarians and library workers imagine/consider young adults?

- d. What methodological skills, specific to young adults do LIS researchers need to gather, evaluate, and analyze young adult literacy practices?
2. What are the information needs and behaviors of 21st century young adults and how might these impact or inform the work of libraries?
 - a. How have the needs and behaviors of young adults evolved throughout the 20th and 21st centuries?
 - b. How do social contexts influence adolescent behavior?
 - c. How do factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socio-economic status, educational level, geographic location (i.e. rural vs. suburban vs. urban), and home language shape information needs and behaviors?
3. How has the increased use of emerging technologies, such as mobile communication devices, social networking tools, and digital resources impacted the information seeking needs and behaviors of the 21st century teen and how might that impact or inform the work of libraries?
 - a. To what degree has the use of these new social and digital tools/mediums transformed information seeking from an individual to a collaborative activity?
 - b. To what extent do 21st century young adults participate in the creation of the information they need and want?
 - c. How does a lack of access to certain technologies in schools and libraries help perpetuate the digital divide for young adults?
 - d. How have libraries and library capacities responded to these new circumstances?
 - e. What is the potential for emerging technologies in regards to scaling out library resources, instruction and service?
4. What barriers exist to the information seeking behaviors of today's young adults and how might libraries address them?
 - a. Which of these barriers are internal to the teens themselves (i.e. developmental for example) and which are external?
 - b. How have libraries responded to these barriers?
 - i. What role have they played in reinforcing these barriers and preventing or limiting the information seeking behavior of teens?
 - ii. What role have they played in reducing or eliminating barriers?

References

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Chelton, Mary K., and Colleen Cool. 2007. *Youth Information-Seeking II: Context, Theories, Models, and Issues*. New York: Scarecrow Press.

Priority Area 4: Informal and Formal Learning Environments and Young Adults

Description/Summary of Topic

Understanding how informal and formal learning environments have an impact on adolescent development and literacy acquisition is of key importance in determining how librarians must serve teens in the 21st century. Informal environments include physical and virtual spaces, such as public libraries and social media, in which young adults take part in activities that inherently lead to learning, but do not have a strictly educational focus. Formal learning environments include physical and virtual spaces, such as school classrooms and online courses, where young adults spend time specifically to learn content.

[The importance of libraries to support flexible learning communities and connected learning opportunities for teens is essential to the traditional values of lifelong learning. Lee Rainie, Executive Director of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, noted in his presentation at the YALSA Summit on the Future of Libraries and Teens, that because of teens' use of social networks and Internet they live in a different learning and living ecosystem. However, teens use of the library in many communities is limited to school related research and homework \(L. W. Braun, M. K. Hartman, S. Hughes-Hassell, & K. Kumasi, 2014, p.5\).](#)

The MacArthur Foundation's 10 year Digital Media and Learning project, founded in 2006, is funding and guiding explorations of formal and informal learning environments and "how digital media are changing the way young people learn, socialize, communicate, and play" (Exploring Digital Media & Learning). The YOUmedia project at the Chicago Public Library is a primary example of this research and work being done leading to an understanding of the place that media, technology, and learning environments play in young adult acquisition of knowledge and 21st century skills.

The importance of 21st century skills is also highlighted in the 2009 report from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) titled, *Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills*. This report provides an overview of what 21st century skills are within a museum and library context and through real-life examples demonstrates how institutions serving youth are moving forward with aiding young people in acquiring the necessary skills. The report states, "While it is true that libraries and museums are—and always have been—well-equipped to provide critical learning experiences to their audiences, this potential must be further developed, defined, and made more accessible. All libraries and museums—and the people they serve—stand to benefit

from becoming more intentional and purposeful about accommodating the lifelong learning needs of people in the 21st century, and doing this work collaboratively in alignment with community needs.”

The teens of today are apart of an ever global and competitive society. They need skills sets that go beyond the traditional academic and into learning and innovation skills. Currently many teens lack these skills for job readiness and success for the future. There is opportunity for libraries to meet these needs in the physical and virtual spaces to provide connected learning opportunities with experts and community members (L. W. Braun, M. K. Hartman, S. Hughes-Hassell, & K. Kumasi, 2014, p.3).

Intense controversy has arisen over whether or not digital technology use, particularly in gaming, is enhancing or detracting from higher level and critical thinking skills. Some researchers believe that the changes documented by MRIs of those who engage in concentrated use of technology are detracting from areas of the brain that facilitate deep thinking and concentrated reading while others vociferously disagree. Furthermore, the dangers of technology and how to mitigate them, e.g., bullying and improper use of personal information, are hard to assess in order to understand benefits vs. detriments.

Research related to young adults , media, technology, and learning environments includes a fundamental ongoing inventory of the technologies with which youth are engaged and to what extent and whether/how this differs with income, gender, and ethnicity. Technologies are in and out of favor quickly. Both young adults and adults make assumptions about young adult technology use that are sometimes inaccurate; it is important to separate myth from reality with accurate data. Fortunately the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project frequently makes available up-to-date data collected with meticulous research methods regarding online technologies and young adults. Less often, but with equally valid research methods, the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) looks at media, including both digital and print, in the lives of tweens and young adults. Their studies also document the time spent with various media both discretely and in multitasking mode. The KFF’s relatively comprehensive studies provide important longitudinal comparisons regarding media use, providing insight into trends. Neither of these foundations attempts in-depth analysis of their research or how it might be used, leaving that task to others who access their data.

How young adults gain access to and use technologies is another crucial research topic. The digital divide used to mean the gulf between those who had ready access to technology and those who did not. Mobile devices (such as smart phones and tablets) may have narrowed that gap to some extent, perhaps only for the more repetitive

communication tasks. Nonetheless, in [2014-2015](#) the digital divide is a divide not of access to technology but a divide in access to specific resources (such as databases) as well as an understanding of how to use those resources successfully.

Even if the device is available, we do not know to what extent government-required or parental imposed filters limit young adults' access to the information they want or need. Questions still linger about how skilled young adults are at using technologies to access accurate information and even more important how adept they are at assessing accuracy or creating information. Some sources such as the programming language developed at the MIT Media Lab for tweens and young adults, Scratch, might lead us to believe that young adults are immensely creative, but little research exists to document how that creativity is enhanced or curtailed by technology. Finally, research based on needs has produced technologies that provide immensely enhanced access to differently-abled users, including young adults, and that could be productively incorporated into contemporary library practice.

Questions for Research

1. A variety of formal and informal learning opportunities are available to teens in order to gain skills, knowledge, and understanding of topics of value within both an educational and recreational context. How do libraries leverage technology and media tools to support teen learning within these varied learning settings?
 - a. What is required for libraries to support informal learning through the use of a variety of media tools?
 - b. How can libraries support young adult acquisition of 21st century learning skills?
 - c. What is the impact of lack of access to new and emerging technologies in schools and libraries on teen successful and safe use of technology for informational and recreational purposes?
 - d. How can public libraries work with schools in order to develop connected informal and formal learning opportunities for young adults?
 - e. What special skills and/or knowledge are required of librarians serving young adults in order to successfully support informal and formal learning opportunities for teens?
2. By keeping abreast of the most recent relevant data collections by the Pew Research and the Kaiser Family Foundations, anyone interested can separate myth from reality regarding young adults and technology. But armed with this knowledge, how can this data be productively used in research or practice in a library setting?

- a. How can libraries and librarians make best use of young adults' pervasive presence on the Internet to learn and to provide the information they want and need?
- b. What can be learned about information needs and preferences from documented trends regarding young adults and technology e.g., mobile devices, that would be of use to information professionals, including librarians?
- c. How can libraries respond best to socio-economic, ethnicity, gender and ability differences in supporting access to technology?

3. Numerous types of questions arise from considering how young adults gain access to and use technologies, some having to do with availability, some with physical or cognitive capabilities, and some with the extent to which creative uses are made of technology.

- a. What constitutes a digital divide in the 21st century, how can it be obliterated and what role might libraries play in eliminating it?
- b. What impact does Internet filtering in libraries or at home have on young adult access to information?
- c. How does the Internet foster creative thinking and problem solving?
- d. How can technology improve access to library services for differently-abled young adults?

4. Knowledge about the impact of technology use for young adults is largely speculative territory. But it is one in which many opinions, some unsubstantiated, exist.

- a. How is digital media changing how young adults learn, socialize, communicate, and play?
- b. How does extensive gaming or online searching affect reflective thinking or reading?
- c. What role can libraries play in mitigating the documented dangers of social media?

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- Institute of Museum and Library Services. "Future of Museums and Libraries: A Discussion Guide," <http://www.ims.gov/pdf/DiscussionGuide.pdf>.
- Kaiser Family Foundation: Media and Health. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/index.cfm>
- MacArthur Foundation. "Exploring Digital Media & Learning." www.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7Bb0386ce3-8b29-4162-8098-e466fb856794%7D/DML_BUFF.PDF

- Pew Research Center Internet & American Life Project: Teen
www.pewinternet.org/topics/Teens.aspx
- Scratch <http://scratch.mit.edu/>
- YOUmedia <http://youmediachicago.org/>

Conclusion

Answers to the questions posed in the four priority areas above will aid librarians as they move further into the 21st century. The agenda is forward-thinking in its framework with a strong focus on the areas librarians need to be well-versed in in order to support the informational and recreational needs of young adults who are born into a world of e-content, technology, mobile devices, and social media.

The research that is an outcome of this agenda will provide information librarians, administrators, policy makers and community members need in order to advocate for high-quality library services for young adults. Teens will therefore have access to library staff, programs, services, and collections that will help them to develop successfully and succeed well after their adolescent years.

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Bibliography

The most recent edition of the YALSA Research Committee's bibliography of current research (~~2006-2009~~2010 - 2012) is available at

http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/research/researchwww.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/research/09researchbibliography_rev.pdf

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Appendix A

Web-Based Presentations and Videos

Libraries and 21st Century Skills Webinar

<http://sas->

[origin.onstreammedia.com/origin/instituteofmuseum/\[Inbox\]/21C_Webinar.mp4](http://origin.onstreammedia.com/origin/instituteofmuseum/[Inbox]/21C_Webinar.mp4)

This webinar, sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), looks at how libraries are integrating 21st century skills acquisition into their program of service.

MacArthur Foundation Channels on YouTube

www.youtube.com/user/macfound#g/c/B8379ACAB9E40DB5

www.youtube.com/user/macfound#g/c/7BC4983C244FF952

Each of these YouTube playlists includes a variety of video presentations on how teaching and learning is changing in a world in which the tools youth have access to include traditional print and technology-based resources.

Meeting of the Minds: Youth, Social Media, and Education

www.nypl.org/audiovideo/meeting-minds-youth-social-media-and-education

Microsoft Researcher and Fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Danah Boyd, discusses what is really going on with teen social media use and the impact of that use on learning.

Radical Change, Literacies, and Teen Readers

https://docs.google.com/present/view?id=dgg5hmcx_1340gc9r7fd4

Educator Eliza Dresang's presentation on the how, why, and what of the changes currently taking place in the area of teen literacy.

Re: Born Digital

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/node/6385>

This series of videos was produced by 2010 interns at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University and covers topics related to digital citizenship, digital footprints, and digital identity.

Teens, the Internet & Communications Technology

https://docs.google.com/present/view?id=0AdvXV1-81b_tZGdnNWhtY3hfMTMwOWY2Nzd3emM5&hl=en

This presentation, by Kristen Purcell from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, looks at the myths and realities of teen use of technology for communication.

Webcast: What Kids Learn When They Create with Digital Media

<http://youtu.be/IUfHZu54W8c>

Renee Hobbs (Temple University), Nichole Pinkard (Digital Youth Network), and Elyse Eldman-Aadahl (National Writing Project) discuss how teens are using technology to create and at the same time gain valuable literacy skills.

Appendix B

YALSA Position Papers

- Need for teen spaces
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/profdev/whitepapers/teenspaces.cfm>
- Importance of Young Adult Services in LIS Curricula
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/profdev/whitepapers/lis.cfm>
- Benefits of Including Dedicated Young Adult Librarian on Staff in the Public Library
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/profdev/whitepapers/yastaff.cfm>
- The Whole Library Approach to Public Library Young Adult Services
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/profdev/whitepapers/wholelibrary.cfm>