Cultural Humility as a Transformative Framework for Librarians, Tutors, and Youth Volunteers

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Community Engagement

Change

Youth

ACTIVISM

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A DIVINE COLLABORATION: PARTNERING WITH HISTORICALLY BLACK GREEK LETTER ORGANIZATIONS FOR TEEN ENGAGEMENT

WINTER 2018

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YALS ON THE WEB
» Want more YALS? Members and subscribers can access the latest and back issues of YALS digitally on the YALSAblog at http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/yals/, as well as browse supplemental YALS articles and resources.
This issue of YALS focuses on the theme Youth Activism through Community Engagement, which is YALSA’s 2017-2018 Presidential theme! This issue covers a variety of ways that you can incorporate youth activism in your programming to foster community engagement.

The Features Section includes three articles that offer different ideas of fostering youth activism through engagement in social and community issues. Regina Townsend, Teen Services Librarian at the Forest Park Public Library in the western suburbs of Chicago, wrote a piece about partnering with historically black Greek letter organizations to foster teen engagement through activism in their community. Josh Hem-Lee and Hadiya Evans from the Denver Public Library discuss Read. Awareness. Dialogue. Action., a book club that is meant to inspire social change and empower youth and the community. Jarred Amato writes about Project LIT and creating opportunities for youth to engage through literature.

The Trending Section includes an article that explores including cultural competency and cultural humility as part of training for volunteers, tutors, and library staff. The article focuses on workshops designed for tutor training for the Seattle Public Library. Nicola Andrews, Sunny Kim, and Josie Watanabe give tips for implementing this type of training in your library.

The Explore Section covers three articles in the Research Roundup that give best practices for facilitating youth activism. The Highlights Section, which features YALSA-related articles, includes an article about getting involved in YALSA and a sneak peek at the new Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff.

Don’t forget that the YALSAblog includes additional materials that complement the print YALS. You’ll find that content at: http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/category/yals.
You can’t stop the power of the youth, ’cause the power of the youth won’t stop.”
—Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota

Youth Activism Through Community Engagement is the theme for my 2017–18 YALSA presidential year and the theme for this issue of YALS. The theme reflects a number of the paradigm shifts identified in YALSA’s Future’s Report (http://www.ala.org/yaforum/sites/ala.org.yaforum/files/content/YALSA_nationalforum_final.pdf) and promotes teen involvement in their communities, thus building teens’ leadership skills and amplifying their voices. The theme strongly aligns with YALSA’s vision and mission statements by supporting library staff in working with teens to address the unique challenges they face in their communities and creating opportunities for teens’ personal growth, academic success, and career development. The theme also demonstrates YALSA’s commitment to an asset-based and youth-centered approach to the transformation of libraries and teen services, and will help library staff focus on developing many of the teen outcomes described in the Reimagined Library Services for and with Teens infographic (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teens-first).

But, perhaps most importantly, I selected Youth Activism Through Community Engagement as my theme because teens are experts on the issues facing communities—they are living the problems. This is especially true for youth who are experiencing marginalization due to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, or other forms of oppression. Teens want to make a difference in their communities and in the world but often lack the skills to take action. As the articles in this issue of YALS show, libraries have the ability and the responsibility to help teens develop the skills in inquiry, evidence, and presentation they need to become agents of positive change in their schools and communities.

(continued on page 35)
YALS IS GOING ALL DIGITAL!

WHO: YALSA MEMBERS AND YALS SUBSCRIBERS

WHAT: YALS WILL BE AN ALL DIGITAL PLATFORM. THIS WILL BE THE LAST PRINT ISSUE

WHEN: SPRING 2018 ISSUE – LATE APRIL

WHERE: ACCESS VIA LINK IN QUARTERLY E-BLAST OR YALSA "MEMBERS' ONLY" PAGE UNDER MEMBER CENTER

WWW(ALA.ORG/YALSA/MEMBER-CENTER

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HOW: UPDATE EMAIL ADDRESS IN YOUR ALA PROFILE TO RECEIVE E-BLASTS

LOG IN AT: WWW.ALA.ORG

QUESTIONS? EMAIL ANNA LAM AT ALAM@ALA.ORG
Recently YALSA released a new set of competencies for library staff. The new competencies, Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/yacompetencies), replace the previous competencies that were last updated in 2010. A lot has changed for library staff, for teen services, and for competencies since 2010, and the new competencies reflect how best to serve teens. The competencies are written not just for teen and youth librarians but for all library staff that serve teens at any type of library. The competencies are broken down into ten content areas, which cover all aspects of service to teens. The competencies in each content area are grouped by three levels, beginning with developing, then practicing, and lastly transforming. Each level is a prerequisite to the next, with knowledge and skill in one level required before moving to the next. The competencies also describe the disposition that library staff need to best serve teens, including:

- Recognizes and respects the diversity of teens and their families, and understands this diversity impacts all areas of practice;
- Recognizes the systemic inequities that exist in our institutions and communities and strives to dismantle them and to provide equitable access for and with all youth;
- Recognizes that quality library services support teens and families, and bridge the gap between school and home.

The rest of this article gives a peek at what the competencies contain.
HIGHLIGHT

Content Areas

Teen Growth and Development:
Knows the typical benchmarks for growth and development and uses this knowledge to plan, provide, and evaluate library resources, programs, and services that meet the multiple needs of teens.

Interactions with Teens: Recognizes the importance of relationships and communication in the development and implementation of quality teen library services, and implements techniques and strategies to support teens individually and in group experiences to develop self-concept, identity, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with peers and adults.

Learning Environments (formal and informal): Cultivates high-quality, developmentally appropriate, flexible learning environments that support teens individually and in group experiences as they engage in formal and informal learning activities.

Learning Experiences (formal and informal): Works with teens, volunteers, community partners, and others to plan, implement, and evaluate high-quality, developmentally appropriate formal and informal learning activities that support teens’ personal and academic interests.

Youth Engagement and Leadership: Responds to all teens’ interests and needs, and acts in partnership with teens to create and implement teen activities and to foster teen leadership.

Community and Family Engagement: Builds respectful, reciprocal relationships with community organizations and families to promote optimal development for teens and to enhance the quality of library services.

Cultural Competency and Responsiveness: Actively promotes respect for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful library atmosphere that embraces diversity.

Equity of Access: Ensures access to a wide variety of library resources, services, and activities for and with all teens, especially those facing challenges to access.

Outcomes and Assessment: Focuses on the impact of library programs for and with teens and uses data to inform service development, implementation, and continuous improvement.

Continuous Learning: Acts ethically, is committed to continuous learning, and advocates for best library practices and policies for teen services.

Selected Competencies
Following are five of the ten content areas with their levels. The full list can be found in the online version http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/yacompetencies

Content Area 1: Teen Growth and Development
Knows the typical benchmarks for growth and development and uses this knowledge to provide library resources, programs, and services that meet the multiple needs of teens.

Library staff understand teen growth and development, respond to the needs of teens, and develop relationships, programs, and services that support them in successfully preparing for adulthood. Taking into consideration cultural differences and special needs affords library staff the opportunity to create experiences that reflect the developmental needs of the teens in their specific community.

Developing
• Is aware of basic benchmarks related to teens’ physical, cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, and creative development, and can describe developmentally appropriate library services and practices.
• Accepts individual differences in teen development and values different attributes such as personalities, temperaments, and cultural influences.
• Is aware of current teen cultures, including use of digital tools, language, and popular media.
• Appreciates that all teens need to develop a sense of self, including a positive identity.

• Understands the role of libraries in helping all teens succeed in school and prepare for college, careers, and life.

Practicing
• Engages teens in college- and career-readiness activities that build on their strengths and meet their individual needs, interests, learning styles, and abilities.
• Uses tools and resources in library programming and services that are pertinent to teen needs, interests, culture, learning styles, and abilities.
• Acknowledges and responds to individual differences in personalities, temperaments, culture, learning styles, and abilities.
• Applies information on teen growth and development, culture, and learning styles to all areas of library practice, including collection development, reference and user services, outreach, and programming.
• Promotes growth and development using appropriate and targeted library activities and resources that support individual teen development, including developing a positive sense of self.

Transforming
• Connects current theories, research, and best practices relating to teen growth and development to the development of library collections, programs, and services.
• Advocates for library policies that support teen developmental needs and growth.
• Connects with library staff and community partners to advance teen growth and development so that all teens are prepared for college, careers, and life.
• Teaches others, including library staff and volunteers, about teen growth and development and how it informs the creation of library services for and with teens.
Content Area 2: Interactions with Teens

Recognizes the importance of relationships and communication in the development and implementation of quality teen library services, and implements techniques and strategies to support teens individually and in group experiences to develop self-concept, identity, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.

All activities library staff engage in, from homework help, to teen internship training, to community engagement, provide opportunities to build relationships with teens. These relationships have a powerful impact on teens and communities. It is through them that teens gain social skills and confidence, learn from adult role models, and gain agency. These interactions result in library staff building relationships with all teens that result in high-quality responsive and flexible services for the age group.

Developing
• Listens to and respects all teens’ interests, opinions, and cultures in the development of library collections, programs, and services.
• Maintains a library environment in which teen confidentiality and privacy is respected.
• Communicates and describes the importance of positive interactions with teens to the development of quality library collections, programs, and services.
• Understands effective group and individual management strategies that are based on theories, research, and best practices for teen development.
• Understands that interacting with teens requires going outside of the library and into the community.
• Is aware of the community’s teen demographics.

Practicing
• Builds relationships with all teens throughout the community and with representatives of diverse cultural groups to inform the strategic development of library services and programs that address community needs and fill gaps, and to promote their use for/with all teens, including those unserved or underserved by the library.
• Uses individual guidance and support for teens by employing methods, services, and resources that are developmentally appropriate and culturally sustaining.
• Creates opportunities for all teens to express their needs and interests in a nonjudgmental and welcoming environment.
• Demonstrates positive teen interactions that are culturally sustaining, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate.
• Partners with community agencies, groups, and institutions to create and facilitate meaningful interactions with unserved and underserved teens.
• Collects data and information from teens and community members to identify teen needs.

Transforming
• Advocates for and develops library policies that support positive teen interactions for all youth throughout the library and with all library staff.
• Connects current theories, research, and best practices related to successful teen interactions to the development of quality teen library programs and services.
• Coaches and mentors library staff, volunteers, and community members on strategies for culturally sustaining, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and positive interactions with all teens.
• Expands opportunities for unserved and underserved teens to build meaningful connections with the library that helps them develop a sense of belonging and ownership.
• Analyzes teen and community data and information, and applies findings to improve and enhance library interactions with all teens.

Content Area 5: Youth Engagement and Leadership

Responds to all teens’ interests and needs, and acts in partnership with teens to plan and implement library activities and to foster teen leadership.

Library staff actively support the age group in developing personal agency, and in cultivating cultural, personal, and social relationships. Providing teens with opportunities to engage in youth voice experiences centered on colearning and codesigning library and community projects is essential. These activities give teens the ability to develop their leadership skills and to create change in their lives and in the world around them.

Developing
• Supports active engagement of all teens in developing library collections, programs, and services.
• Shares leadership role with teens, and provides opportunities for teens to contribute knowledge and skills to teen collections, services, activities, and programs.
• Fosters teens’ critical thinking, goal setting, problem solving, conflict management, decision making, and other important life skills.
• Provides meaningful opportunities for youth voice to be included in library collection development, planning, programs, and activities.

Practicing
• Engages teens in leadership activities in ways that are meaningful to them and that build a variety of interpersonal and workforce-ready skills.
• Promotes teen-initiated and teen-led library collection development, programs and services throughout the year.
• Designs activities that support teen acquisition of self-confidence, and leadership and teamwork skills.
• Develops teens’ capacity for self-reflection, communication, empathy,
and appreciation of diverse opinions and cultures.
• Encourages teens in opportunities to connect with the community through service learning and civic engagement projects.

Transforming
• Connects with others to amplify youth voice in library and community planning and activities.
• Advocates for and develops policies that recognize and support teen engagement and leadership.
• Connects current theories, research, and best practices related to teen leadership and engagement.
• Assesses activities and programs to support teen leadership development.
• Advocates in the library and community for expanded pathways for all youth to be heard and assume leadership roles, especially those from traditionally marginalized communities.

Content Area 6: Community and Family Engagement
Builds respectful, reciprocal relationships with community organizations and families to promote optimal development for teens and to enhance the quality of library services.

Teens carry out their lives in multiple settings including parks, out-of-school-time organizations, schools, public libraries, places of worship, jobs, and home. To create seamless opportunities for gaining social and life skills, through formal and informal learning, library staff work with community organizations, schools, and families. To do this, staff implement culturally competent practices to connect teens and their families to the information and resources they need.

Developing
• Maintains open, friendly, cooperative, and respectful relationships with families, community partners, and other library staff and administrators.
• Communicates regularly with other library staff, family, and community members about library collections, services, and resources.
• Identifies and uses community resources to support and assist teens and their families and to enhance teen library collections, programs, and services.
• Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
• Fosters an asset-based lens to understand the larger community context within which teens and their families live and to identify potential community partners.
• Recognizes the relationship between teen services and the library’s mission and goals.
• Understands the value of conducting a community needs assessment to inform the development of teen services priorities.
• Recognizes the influence of community norms on relationships, environment, and learning, and the implications these have for library services.

Practicing
• Builds and demonstrates reciprocal and cooperative relationships with other library staff and administrators, families, and community partners to meet the needs of all teens, including the unserved and underserved.
• Engages library staff, families, and community partners in regular discussions and activities to improve library collections and services, and to promote engagement in support of teen library services.
• Applies strategies to promote the value of high-quality teen library services as part of the overall library’s mission and goals through library strategic planning and governance, and the political process.
• Implements and supports best and promising practices for volunteer programs that support teen services.

Transforming
• Connects with others to assess teen and community needs.
• Expands relationship with library and community partners to ensure equitable and inclusive services for/with all teens throughout the community.
• Represents teens in collaborative community endeavors to support learning, development, and well-being.
• Teaches, mentors, and coaches others about how best to promote and implement community and family engagement.
• Advocates for and designs library policies that support teen, family, and community engagement.
• Connects current theories, research, and best practices as they relate to community and family engagement.
• Interprets community needs assessments to guide the development of teen collections, services, and programs.

Content Area 7: Cultural Competency and Responsiveness
Actively promotes appreciation for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful library atmosphere that embraces diversity.

Library staff actively promote respect for and seek self-understanding of cultural diversity. They come to know and respect diverse cultural backgrounds and characteristics through interaction with individuals from diverse linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and other groups, and to fully integrate the culture of diverse groups into planning, implementing, and evaluating culturally sustaining and bias-free programs, services, and workplaces. The development of complex, interconnected, and evolving cultural competencies on both personal and organizational levels requires dedication and cumulative and consistent work.

Developing
• Is aware of own cultural beliefs and practices.
Recognizes and values cultural differences in teens, families, and communities, including how cultural differences affect interactions with peers, adults, and institutions such as the library.

Communicates the value of equity and inclusion in library services for and with teens.

Recognizes and supports individual expression respecting cultural influences.

Recognizes barriers such as racism, ethnocentrism, classism, heterosexism, genderism, ableism, and other systems of discrimination and exclusion in the community and its institutions, including the library, and interrupts them by way of culturally competent services.

Describes own understanding of different cultural groups, including one’s own cultural identities, beliefs, practices, and biases.

Describes cultural and environmental effects on learning, behavior, and development and the implications this has for library collections, programs, and services.

Creates inclusive, welcoming, and respectful library spaces, collections, and services for and with all teens and their families.

Builds relationships with culturally specific organizations and other relevant community partners to improve and expand library services.

Models the use of culturally diverse materials and resources through collections, services, and programs to support the cultural identity, beliefs, and practices of all teens and families.

Connects library services, including collection development, reference and user services, outreach, and programming, with the experiences and cultures of the community.

Advocates for and designs library policies that are culturally respectful and that promote equity and inclusion in teen library services.

Expands relationships with community partners to design and implement projects that support cultural experiences and address community needs.

Advocates for hiring culturally diverse library staff and engaging culturally diverse volunteers.

Check out the full competencies online and supplementary resources like the Teen Service Competencies for Library Staff Chart (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/TEEN%20SERVICES%20COMPETENCIES_Chart.pdf), which gives the competencies content in a compact format.

Editor’s note: The information for this article was taken from our Teen Service Competencies for Library Staff. Read and download the competencies in their entirety for more information for better serving your teens at http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/ycocompetencies

**Practicing**

**Transforming**
Getting Involved with YALSA!

What is your pathway to participation?

Getting Involved with YALSA!

Whether you are a new member or have been a member for years and are thinking about how to best be involved with YALSA, there are options for everyone. YALSA offers a variety of paths to involvement. Getting involved in YALSA doesn’t take knowing a secret handshake or a complex process. All you have to do is apply! I applied for the member manager of the YALSAblog position and got it, and that kicked off my long-term involvement with YALSA. After holding this position for a couple of years, I was asked to run for the board of directors. I was not elected the first time, but ended up being asked by the board to fill a one-year term that came open when a board member had to resign early. As I was filling that one-year position, I was asked to run for secretary and was elected. During my first year as secretary, I transitioned from being the member manager of the YALSAblog to being the editor for YALS. I ran for president-elect during my first year as secretary, which is the position I now serve in. For many others their path to YALSA leadership starts with committee service.

Now YALSA offers even more ways than ever before to get involved. Committee, jury, advisory board, and taskforce commitments are for three months, six months, and twelve months, depending on the group. There are blogging opportunities on the YALSAblog and The Hub. Or if you are interested in writing longer pieces, contact the editor of YALS and talk about submitting an article. Even if you are new to your position or YALSA this is a great opportunity to share your learning experiences and expertise with others. The Selected Lists have now transitioned to The Hub and you can apply to work on a Selected List Blogging Team (applications are accepted July–Sept. each year). The transition of the lists from committees to the blog means that there is more opportunity to participate because you are not required to go to the conferences.

There are also a variety of leadership positions available. You can apply to be the member manager for the two blogs, YALSAblog and The Hub, and the Program HQ when they are available. You can volunteer to chair a committee, jury, advisory board or taskforce. Or, if you are interested in governance, talk to members of the board development committee about running for a spot on the board. Want to know what the board does but aren’t sure that you are ready to commit to a three-year term? Apply for the board fellow position! It is a one-year commitment that helps you understand what the board does.

If you have a great idea and know like-minded members who are interested in the same thing, create an interest group (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsahandbook/convenor). Current interest groups include those based on location, teen mental health, teen services coordinators, and teens are not alone. These are opt-in, informal groups you can create or join to talk with others who have similar interests or live in similar areas.

If your schedule doesn’t allow for participation in on-going activities, YALSA has a variety of one-time opportunities, including:

• Hosting a local meet-up
• Staffing an exhibit booth at a state or national conference
• Presenting a program at the symposium or ALA’s Annual Conference
• Presenting a webinar
• Updating or creating a YALSA wiki page
• And more

For more information about how to get involved in YALSA, go to the Get Involved with YALSA web page (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/getinvolved/getinvolved). Also, volunteer opportunities are shared via the weekly YALSA eNews, so make sure you’re receiving and reading that regularly. If you have any questions about getting involved, or want to learn more, please contact Letitia Smith at lsmith@ala.org or 312-280-4390 and she’ll be happy to help.
DIG INTO THE TEEN SERVICES COMPETENCIES WITH THESE ACTIVITIES!

YALSA will host a variety of online training and discussions beginning in March 2018. Each month will focus on a different competency in YALSA’s new Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff.

- Webinars: these free webinars will be held from 2 – 3pm, eastern, the second Thursday of the month. The recording will be available for those who can’t participate in the live session. Reserve your free seat at www.ala.org/yalsa/onlinelearning/webinar (100 seats available on a first come, first served basis)
- Facilitated Discussions: these online chats for YALSA members only will provide members with a chance to dig deeper into the topic and to learn from their peers by exchanging ideas, getting questions answered, etc.
- Social Media: For those who only have a short amount of time, check out the monthly post on the YALSAblog and/or a Twitter Chat. Use #yalsaCE to participate in the chats.

Schedule of Activities

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<td>Cultural Competency &amp; Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Continuous Learning</td>
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Access the competencies at www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/yacompetencies
Check in on the Selected List Transition

In January 2017, YALSA transitioned the first selected lists, Amazing Audiobooks (AA) and Quick Picks (QP) to the Hub (http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/). The goals of the transition were to provide these lists in a more timely, user-friendly way, provide increased opportunities for virtual member and teen involvement, and better address the needs of diverse teens. You can read the complete rationale in this midwinter 2017 board document: http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/Selected ListTransition_MW17.pdf

In early 2017, YALSA members applied for and were selected to serve on an AA team and a QP team to:

- Find and read titles (publishers are still providing titles and members are still suggesting titles!)
- Meet virtually to discuss and nominate titles
- Write blog posts about the nominated titles
- Review nominations and vote to create the Best of Lists at the end of the year (the 2018 lists are coming soon!)

Using the processes described in the Amazing Audiobooks Policies and Procedures (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/amazingaudiobooks/policies) and the Quick Picks Policies and Procedures (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/quickpicks/quickpicksreluctantyoungadult) the blogging teams have been busy at work! Currently they are choosing the titles that will be included in the year’s best of AA list and best of QP list. The list of nominees can be viewed on the Hub.

During the year, when the blogging teams nominated a title for the AA or QP lists, a short description of the title was posted to the Hub using the hashtags #QP2018 and #AA2018. By using these hashtags to search the Hub, library staff have been able to read about the books as they are being nominated, rather than having to wait until the final best of lists are compiled and published. This change has allowed library staff to learn about and purchase nominated titles throughout the year, thus putting QP and AA titles in the hands of teens who need them more quickly. It has also allowed library staff to learn about all the titles that are nominated (many of which may be perfect for their teens but may not make it to the best of lists), not just the ones that will eventually be selected for the best of lists. Titles that make the final cut will also be added to the Teen Bookfinder Database (http://booklists.yalsa.net/) and app.

In September, YALSA President Sandra Hughes-Hassell organized a call with the Hub member manager, QP and AA blogging team coordinators and staff to talk about how the
transition was progressing. During this discussion they learned that due to a miscommunication nominees weren’t being posted regularly, and both teams had a backlog of nominees to go online. They addressed this and some other issues, and have learned from this year’s first attempt so that next year will progress smoothly.

Dana Hutchins, the 2017 QP blogging team coordinator, shared her experience with YALS. Before taking on this position, Dana had experience participating on and chairing selected list committees. Dana has had a big job this year, helping lead this transition. Dana is committed to the process and describing some of the important impacts that the transitioned lists have offered: “The list is more timely, and Hub readers have access to more information about the nominees through our blog posts.” The year offered some challenges, being the first year the group existed. Dana describes her strategies for making the first year of the Quick Picks transition a success: “With my background chairing selection committees, I felt confident in being able to run the nomination and reading aspects of the blogging group. I really don’t have prior experience blogging, so I relied on training from the Hub manager to help walk me through the process. Since this is the ‘guinea pig’ year, we as a blogging team worked together to figure out how to make the transition successful through trial and error. We really found our groove about midway through the year and now our process works well for all the members of the team. For a transition year, it went well. We were all new to Quick Picks this year and had to work together to determine our strategy for nominations, reading, blogging schedule, and book discussion sessions every two weeks via Zoom.” From this first iteration, Dana shares some takeaways to improve the process for 2018: “Start earlier with the Zoom meetings. It is a highlight to be able to get together on Zoom and discuss our nominations every other week. We also get to see each other and talk and get to know each other, which I feel enhances the work and the cohesiveness of the group.”

Beginning on January 1st, 2018, Best Fiction for Young Adults (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/best-fiction-young-adults) and Great Graphic Novels (http://www.ala.org/yalsa/great-graphic-novels) will be transitioned to the Hub, too. The volunteer form was open from August through September for YALSA members to volunteer to serve on the QP, AA, BFYA, and GGN blogging teams. Stephen Ashley, the Hub member manager, appointed and trained the blogging teams. As the teams nominate titles for AA, QP, and BFYA and GGN lists, short descriptions will be posted to the Hub using the hashtags #BFYA2019, #GGN2019, #QP2019, and #AA2019 to facilitate ease of access.

YALSA staff and YALSA president continue to work with the Hub member manager, the Hub advisory board, and our members to ensure that the transition to the Hub of the YALSA selected lists continues, and to work out any challenges that arise. Per a board directive, Sandra Hughes-Hassell will also assemble a group of members in January 2018 to formally evaluate how the first transition year went and to submit recommendations for the board to review and act on. YALSA is confident that working together the changes to the selected lists are benefiting teens, our members, and libraries!

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**Guidelines for Authors**

*Young Adult Library Services* is the official publication of the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association. *Young Adult Library Services* is a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with young adults (ages twelve through eighteen) that showcases current research and practice relating to teen services and spotlights significant activities and programs of the division.

For submission and author guidelines, please visit http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/yals/submissions/.
For many, adolescence is a time of increasing consciousness of societal ills and their own abilities to address them. Such an awakening is played up beautifully in the fourth Harry Potter novel (Rowling, 2002), where his friend Hermione launches a one-girl campaign for elvish welfare. Unfortunately, Hermione’s efforts fail due to lack of peer interest combined with her own failure to properly grasp the complexities of the situation. But what if she’d had an adult in her life really listening to her, someone who could mentor her in taking social action, connect her to existing networks, and amplify her strong young voice for change?

As librarians, we can play a pivotal role in supporting youth activism within our communities. Not only can we play this role but we should play it as it both benefits our teens and furthers the mission of the library. Among many affordances, youth activism programs have been shown to improve strategic thinking abilities (Larson & Hansen, 2005), strengthen literacy practices (Haddix, Everson, & Hodge, 2015), and empower youth to continue civic involvement (Shiller, 2013). In trade, librarians who support these programs can better understand the emergent needs that their patrons face and become more embedded within community support systems. The following three research articles describe best practices and key features of activities that foster youth civic engagement.


Kirshner spent two years with three different multiracial activism groups in working class and poor neighborhoods. He observed that adults had distinct ways of guiding youth participation. As any librarian with active teen volunteers knows, adults must manage a tension between “youth empowerment principles” and “the task demands of the campaigns.” In other words, how much ownership do we turn over to the kids while still making sure some task, activity, or program...
actually gets done? The adults in these groups approached the dilemma in three different ways: facilitation, apprenticeship, and joint work.

Facilitation approaches emphasized youth leadership for selecting and implementing projects, plus facilitating meetings. Adults functioned as neutral facilitators, offering support but limited assistance. Youth gained experience in a variety of leadership tasks and learned through trial and error in their activities. But they did not have opportunities to work alongside experienced adult mentors, nor were their campaigns particularly impactful for the community. In apprenticeship models, direct adult participation increased, particularly through coaching and feedback on youth ideas and implementation. Here, youth had less independent practice of leadership skills but gained more know-how from savvy adult activists who helped them launch an effective campaign. Organizations using the joint work approach emphasized the success of the projects, with youth and adults collaboratively planning and implementing activities. Boundaries between participants were drawn not by age but by knowledge (who knows how to do what). Adults did not focus on teaching or mentoring but worked as equal colleagues with experienced youth and allowed novice youth to learn tacitly through modeling. While each organization primarily used one of the approaches, all used the three ways to guide youth participation as needed. The chosen approach varied with project complexity, institutional context and goals, and the youths’ prior experiences and skills. Based on the findings, Kirshner recommends four design principles for promoting youth civic participation.

First, start with an authentic civic problem, something that requires interaction with a broader public to solve. To identify a meaningful problem with the youth, look for needs or goals held by community members. But don’t frame it as “service” or “charity,” which puts a deficit lens on the teens’ community and can discourage teens from recognizing the value of their collaboration.

Second, provide access to mature civic participation practices. Youth need to witness adult experts at work, especially from their own communities. This offers both models of activism for teens as well as a vision of their own adult futures.

Third, be responsive to specific skill levels and interests of youth. Intentionally plan opportunities for teens to express their interests and develop the skills needed to follow them, or risk alienating the very people you seek to involve.

Fourth, plan in terms of timescales that exceed one or two semesters. This may mean that you have “generations” of youth who participate in a project, but making impactful change in society requires more time than a typical academic year. Be sure to plan opportunities to help newcomers become integral to the work.


Helgeson and Schneider looked at violence prevention organizations across the country that engaged youth within their communities. They identified four exemplary organizations that treated youth as authentic stakeholders and offered genuine engagement opportunities. From their analysis, the authors make four recommendations for any community-based organization seeking to work with teens.

Recommendation 1 – Create Meaningful Youth Leadership Opportunities (Core Value: Meaningful Youth Leadership). Youth need roles and tasks that directly contribute to the mission of the organization, creating feelings of legitimacy and ownership. The authors described “faux stakeholder syndrome” where an organization only offered teens “menial responsibilities or empty titles.” (Hint: cutting scratch paper or wiping down picture books likely fall into these categories.) Most impactful were opportunities to mentor newer youth participants and co-lead activities with organization staff.

Recommendation 2 – Meet Youth Where They Are (Core Value: Accessibility). Accessibility is critical to successful programs, both physically and culturally. This means scheduling activities in familiar and easily reached locations, as well as being open to the teens’ preferred modes of communication. This includes interacting via social media platforms most used in your communities.

Recommendation 3 – Partners Don’t Compete (Core Value: Collaboration). Actively pursuing partnerships within public, private, and nonprofit sectors made these organizations more effective with youth and better used the community resources. This extra effort paid off by extending the reach of each organization, thus supporting youth holistically throughout their area.

Recommendation 4 – Implement Youth Involvement in Program Evaluation (Core Value: Active Listening). The authors argue that quantitative data is not enough evidence for evaluating programs. Valuing youth as stakeholders means valuing their voices, particularly since they are the intended beneficiaries of the program activities. The participants’ perspectives and opinions should be gathered throughout the program by providing clear

Another research team also looked across organizations for best practices in youth engagement, focusing on municipal government. Augsberger and colleagues interviewed and observed participants representing 24 youth councils in the greater Boston region. The authors identified seven best practices for cultivating active youth engagement that could easily be applied to teen library councils and other ongoing library initiatives.

1. Develop the youth council relevant to the local context. Just like library programs can be successful in one branch and then flop in another, the same council structure and activities do not work in every location or even from year to year in the same place. Make your council relevant to the local community, the mission of your library, and the interests and abilities of the teens involved. Also, establish a process of ongoing reflection so your activities can evolve in response to changes in the community and in the youth participating.

2. Align mission, structure, and activities of the council. The current focus of your council should match the group’s structure and activities. Whether they are organized around a specific civic problem or serve more broadly as an ongoing advisory board, the tasks, roles, and opportunities should clearly contribute to the mission. This keeps youth engaged because they can see their efforts have meaning and purpose.

3. Get support from adult allies. Councils thrive when they have two key types of adult support. The first is at the broader organization or community level, such as political leaders or higher level library management. They serve to validate the importance of youth participation and carry that message to their constituencies. The second is a staff member with youth-related expertise directly involved with the operation of the council—a role that teen services librarians fill expertly.

4. Approach diversity of council membership in thoughtful ways. Consider multiple aspects of diversity in identity and experiences, such as youth in foster care or immigrant youth. Aim for membership that represents the youth in your community and/or gives underrepresented members an opportunity to speak. A common problem in youth programs is a lack of academic diversity—those top students tend to volunteer and be chosen. Look beyond the obvious choices and engage youth who might be overlooked for other programs yet still have contributions to make. Your council may be an ideal fit for developing their leadership skills.

5. Provide youth development opportunities. As noted in the previously discussed articles, teens need training and support from adults to undertake new tasks and assume leadership. Consciously plan for this by including guidance opportunities within the council’s activities.

6. Recognize and address anti-youth attitudes. While we librarians believe in the capability of our teens, other library staff or community members may be more skeptical about the value of youth civic engagement. The article authors found discouraging adult attitudes embedded in “institutional context and procedural requirements; cultural and social norms; lack of clarity about children’s participation; and concerns about negative consequences.” Examine not only what people say about or to youth participants but also if the policies and expectations in place locally are reasonable or are restricting youth participation.

7. Be purposeful in providing social networking opportunities. Many youth join councils with the goal of socializing with their peers. Utilize appropriate social media networks to build and maintain social relationships. Additionally, consider council activities that will broaden the teens’ social network with adults who offer education and employment opportunities.

In the most recent mission statement for young adult library services, we are called upon to “foster learning, personal development, and civic engagement among teens” (Young Adult Library Services Association, 2014).

By supporting youth activists, we can foster all three of these areas while improving the community for people of all ages.

For other resources, see the companion blog post: http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/yals/

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Cultural Humility as a Transformative Framework for Librarians, Tutors, and Youth Volunteers

Applying a lens of cultural responsiveness in training library staff and volunteers

Background

The Seattle Public Library provides K–12 students with a free after-school program called Homework Help, which offers tutoring in science, mathematics, social studies, and English. The program has grown from a service offered at a single branch in 1997 to now being offered at twelve branches; it receives system-wide support in planning and maintaining the service. Homework Help volunteers work with students one-on-one or in small groups on a drop-in, first-come, first-served basis, to provide them with homework support; this also helps students form meaningful relationships with volunteers and the library. Students who do not have homework can also improve their reading or mathematics skills with a trained tutor or engage in educational games.

In the 2016–17 school year, this program had over 13,000 visits and helped over 1,700 students. A significant marker of the program’s success was the establishment of a Formal Learning Librarian position in 2012—a role that supports Homework Help and also connects with other academic support programs in Seattle.

In addition to growing in size, the Homework Help program has also consistently evolved to meet the needs of students and Seattle Public Schools. When the Seattle Public Schools schedule changed in 2015 to let elementary students out of school earlier, the start time for Homework Help programs changed accordingly. In 2016–17, Seattle Public Schools made homework optional for grades K–5, resulting in reduced engagement with the Homework Help program.

However, after feedback from families indicated a continued need for math and reading practice, Homework Help volunteers received training on educational games to offer more conversational and informal learning opportunities.

When considering the students who attend Homework Help, it is important to note that 80% of attendees are English language learners or come from neighborhoods with high federal free and reduced lunch statistics. Historically, those who are able to volunteer with the Homework Help program have been over the age of 50 and white. Since 2012, the volunteer coordinator has made it a priority to recruit younger volunteers and people of color; consequently, the volunteer pool is slowly changing to more closely reflect the demographics of Homework Help students. The Formal Learning Librarian also tracks data including attendance, school test scores, homework subjects, and free and reduced lunch statistics in order to measure ways Homework Help can best serve its students and the Seattle Public Schools community.

Much of the effort to improve the quality of Homework Help has been focused on training Homework Help volunteers. To this end, the Seattle Public Library became the fiscal sponsor and chair of the Seattle Tutoring Coalition (STC) in 2016. The STC provides free training for tutoring volunteers to improve the quality of various homework assistance programs offered in King County. The members of the STC include the Bureau of Fearless Ideas, Catholic Community Services, Neighborhood House, Seattle Public Schools, Tree House, United
Way, and the Seattle Public Library. Many of these member organizations are small and have limited funding; but the STC pools resources to provide an annual conference and smaller training opportunities throughout the year. To date, the STC has provided training opportunities to over 200 volunteer tutors each year, which also includes tutors who are not from STC member organizations but who still provide services on a volunteer basis.

**Designing the Workshop**

Homework Help tutors are recruited locally, and ideally the volunteers should live in the neighborhoods where they tutor, but this is not always the case. While potential tutors receive a growing amount of academic training and support, there is inadequate emphasis on the wider impact they will have on their students, particularly in the area of cultural competency. Volunteers with little value for and training on cultural competencies risk failing to engage their students or to convey that libraries are a welcoming space for people of all backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles. This is particularly important when considering the disparity between the backgrounds of those who have the means to volunteer their time and the students who seek volunteer tutors over paid alternatives.

While volunteering as a Homework Help tutor, Sunny noticed the varying levels of comfort other tutors had with cultures outside their own. Some examples of problematic tutor behavior included declaring that a student’s name is too difficult for them to pronounce, failing to support more boisterous students, making assumptions about the culture and homelife of a student, and being unable to relate to diverse life experiences.

Later, when Sunny and Nicola were candidates for the Master of Library and Information Science degree at the University of Washington Information School, the Homework Help program came to mind as a potential Capstone project. The Capstone project is the culminating project of the degree, consisting of one academic quarter dedicated to project planning to solve an information need and a second quarter to serve as a testing and implementation phase. Both Sunny and Nicola had focused on social justice issues throughout their degrees and had experience with a variety of community organization and library service efforts. They also both had personal experience in navigating microaggressions and both learning to address unconscious biases and teaching others to do the same. With Josie Watanabe, the Formal Learning Librarian acting as the project sponsor, Nicola and Sunny began the process of designing a workshop and training materials to support volunteer tutors around cultural competency.

Initially, a cultural competency framework was used as the basis of creating the workshop, but research quickly revealed some of the historical limitations of that approach. Notably, Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-García’s article in the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, “Cultural Humility versus Cultural Competence: A Critical Distinction in Defining Physician Training Outcomes in Multicultural Education” (1998) explored how defining cultural competency narrowly as if there is a “finite body of knowledge” can actually create damaging outcomes. The checklist mentality identified as harmful by Tervalon and Murray–García was recently spotted in a nursing textbook, *Nursing: A Concept-Based Approach to Learning*, published by Pearson Education. The publisher has since recalled the book after broad public outcry because of the stereotypical and offensive list of “cultural differences in response to pain.” Cultural competency is not something that can be attained for all time, nor is it a series of dehumanizing checklists.

Tervalon and Murray–García argue for using the framework of “cultural humility” as a “commitment and active engagement in a lifelong process” (p. 118). Cultural humility is an ongoing process that focuses on three things: self-evaluation of one’s own background and expectations, committing to redress power imbalances, and building relationships. Rather than provide a checklist of information that might encompass each community that the Seattle Public Library works with, a more effective training session begins the process of developing tutors who would dedicate themselves to lifelong learning and hold themselves accountable in thinking how their background, beliefs, and behavior might impact those they are teaching.

In improving the training and support tutors received in cultural humility, Sunny and Nicola hoped that this would result in improved student learning, as well as richer relationships and perceptions of public libraries as inclusive spaces for students. The works of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire were also integrated into the design of the workshop.

Designing an effective workshop also required an assessment of the current curriculum and training materials available, which included reviewing an assessment of the Homework Help program that had been carried out in 2012. Current volunteers were surveyed to gauge their understanding of and needs around cultural competency/humility, and Sunny attended an all-city tutor training session provided by the Seattle Tutoring Coalition. While Nicola and Sunny were not able to survey the students or their families, they did examine the demographics of students in the Seattle Public Schools in an attempt to further gauge their needs.
The Pilot Workshop
In the lead-up to the workshop, participants were sent prework to increase their understanding of key concepts and encourage personal reflection. This prework included taking the “Project Implicit” implicit association test and reading some short popular media pieces about the impact of implicit bias on education.

The two-hour pilot workshop was held on a Saturday morning, in a meeting room of a local branch library, and included twenty-five participants who are volunteer tutors for a variety of libraries and nonprofit agencies. Josie, Sunny, and Nicola were all present as cofacilitators of the workshop. The workshop had two main learning objectives, which were shared with the participants:

1. Volunteers learn that cultural competency is a complicated and ongoing process
2. Volunteers take away specific tools and strategies to support students

The workshop opened by setting some community agreements around conduct to encourage respectful and engaged participation. Participants were also asked to examine their own biases and reflect on their own identities, while acknowledging and reflecting on systems of power and oppression. From there, the facilitators shared local student demographics and ensured that there was a shared understanding of culture, cultural competency, and cultural humility. Laying the groundwork for clear and effective communication between participants involved taking some time to define concepts such as privilege, intersectionality, and implicit bias, and including time to answer questions or clarify concepts. The facilitators also took the opportunity to challenge some common misconceptions and pitfalls around culture and cultural humility.

The next part of the workshop encouraged participants to look inward and consider their own privilege and identities in relation to those of other people. After this reflection time, participants shared their thoughts with a partner and then engaged in group dialogue around their own experiences and reflections as a tutor. Some participants shared difficult scenarios where they did not actively address the issue, while others shared some situations where they later regretted their actions. The participants were then divided into smaller groups where they brainstormed and shared different strategies to proactively support a diverse group of students. The participants allowed themselves to be vulnerable in sharing their challenges, and collaborative in brainstorming effective strategies to take action, which greatly assisted in the overall success of the workshop.

Evaluating the Workshop
At the conclusion of the workshop, participants completed an anonymous evaluation. The facilitators also later followed up with participants, e-mailing them learning materials that they could use in the future. Josie, Sunny, and Nicola also debriefed after the workshop, reviewing the feedback that they received and exchanging dialogue on how they thought the day went, and what they might change in future iterations of the workshop.

According to participant evaluations, the preworkshop homework was very helpful in preparing them to have rich conversations during the day. Participants also found the framework of cultural humility to be helpful in framing classroom/tutoring interactions. One of the most valuable experiences for participants was the opportunity to discuss challenging interactions with peers and to practice coming up with different ways for managing student behaviors and needs. One of the most salient pieces of feedback that was received was a strong desire to include more student voices and perspectives in the workshop.

As a result of this project, components of this pilot training have been added to Seattle tutoring coalition training for 2017-2018.

Tips for Implementation
If your library system is beginning to consider how you can apply a racial and social justice lens in best serving your patrons or students, you may benefit from supplementing the training given to your staff and volunteers with a cultural humility workshop. In reflecting on our experience in designing and implementing a workshop, we offer the following suggestions:

1. Center the student perspective.

As much as you can, focus on the

Cultural humility is an ongoing process that focuses on three things: self-valuation of one’s own background and expectations, committing to redress power imbalances, and building relationships.
needs of your students and try to include their voices in your workshop, whether through surveys, testimonials, or observations of how they use library spaces and services.

2. **Start small.** Our two-hour training session could have benefited from being broken down into three smaller parts:
   a. Structural Racism
   b. Cultural Humility
   c. Counteracting Bias

3. **Consider your group size.** Some people may feel more comfortable speaking up in an intimate group; and a group that is too large may increase the likelihood of a problematic interaction that goes unchallenged. Having a smaller ratio of participants to facilitators can greatly help to achieve the goals of your workshop.

4. **Seek experienced and diverse facilitators.** Both Nicola, who is Maori, and Sunny, who is Korean American, were able to draw on their own experiences as well as research to inform the workshop. They also had a strong background in equity work, interrupting white supremacy, and counteracting bias in institutional settings.

5. **Make it relevant.** It is easy for participants and facilitators alike to fixate on their individual behavior in challenging tutoring situations. However, don’t forget to consider how cultural humility can transform your specific environment, whether that means the tutoring space, library policy, or institutional messaging. Everything comes back to systems of oppression and power.

6. **Be gracious, yet firm.** Addressing bias in the classroom is a daunting topic, and many of the concepts we introduced (from pronouns to privilege) were new or challenging to our participants. Be accommodating in clarifying concepts, but know when to keep things moving.

7. **Remember that intention does not always align with impact.** Despite our best intentions, we still made a misstep during our workshop that offended one of our participants. It is important for trainers and facilitators to examine their own biases and be open to model how to work through culturally challenging moments.

8. **Acknowledge the problematic.** Cultural humility is a learning process, so you can expect to make one or two missteps or faux pas. However, it is also important to acknowledge the moment—own your mistake without making it about your discomfort—commit to doing better, and move on.

9. **Encourage staff and volunteers to invest in their own learning and development beyond your training session.** You could make some recommendations from your own library holdings!

10. **Begin to apply a lens of cultural responsiveness in all workshops, trainings, meetings, and collateral that you offer.** Upholding social justice and equity is an ongoing practice, but also one that needs to be normalized within institutions as valid and valuable work.

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A Divine Collaboration: Partnering with Historically Black Greek Letter Organizations for Teen Engagement

Inspiring activism through service

Regina Townsend

While many believe that sorority and fraternity life is limited to college years and campuses, historically black Greek letter organizations carry their work well past college, consider membership a lifelong commitment, and are eager and efficient community partners. Founded in the midst of segregation, suffrage, and racial tension, each was born in times of political and social unrest, choosing to unify and work together to enrich their communities. If you’re looking for a great resource for social engagement and activism with teens, you may be surprised to learn that you need look no further than your local chapter.

The Divine 9, a nickname for the nine oldest historically black organizations, is comprised of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.; Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.; and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.. These black Greek letter organizations, also known as BGLOs, have chapters and service areas spanning from the United States to as far as the United Arab Emirates and Africa.

Pivotal members of social and political movements, including politicians, artists, educators, and influencers, are on their rosters, including Martin Luther King, Jr. (Alpha Phi Alpha), Rep. John Lewis (Phi Beta Sigma), Dorothy Height (Delta Sigma Theta), Rep. Donna Edwards (Zeta Phi Beta), Maya Angelou (Alpha Kappa Alpha), Steve Harvey (Omega Psi Phi), and many others. You can find members out on the streets, in boardrooms, and even on your television screens, continuing to mobilize, educate, raise awareness, and encourage unity and progress through programs, national initiatives, and community forums.

Why Partner with a BGLO?

As we all know from working with teens, voice and perspective matters. I try to introduce my teens to groups such as these that can provide diverse voices and perspectives in the hopes that it gets them thinking more, which in turn makes them want to do more. To partner with these groups means to build upon a roster of educated and professional men and women with a commitment to social service and philanthropy. Members embody a broad range of professions and skill sets, and many local chapters have officers who work primarily on scholarship or...
educational initiatives, which can be a great resource.

Along with the wealth of experiences and life paths these organizations bring to the table, they also bring along their long-standing partnerships with institutions such as St. Jude, the March of Dimes, and the American Heart Association, to name a few. Connecting our teens to these groups can not only help teens expand service ideas that they may already have but also provide them with an entry point to activism and service that they may not otherwise receive.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, which prides itself on being a “community conscious, action-oriented organization,” has partnered with the American Advertising Federation on a study of images of African American women in media. In breaking down the idea of systemic racism, a workshop with teens about cultural representation in the media could be a starting point for real conversation and action.

Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority’s focus on global impact and environmental ownership includes what they’re calling the “1908 Playground Project,” a playground restoration and refresh initiative where chapters are partnering with communities and park districts to clean and update local playgrounds. While many teens may want to jump headfirst into other trending topics in the news, I think it’s equally important to remind them that making a difference can be as simple as providing children with safe, inviting, and clean places to play. The AKA initiative’s goal is to restore, refresh, and renew 1,908 playgrounds by 2018.

One of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority’s national youth initiatives, the Dr. Betty Shabazz Academy, named for Delta member and widow of civil rights leader Malcolm X, exposes teen girls to cultural and STEM activities designed to prepare them to be 21st-century leaders. A program that discusses access and equity in relation to girls and education globally could be an amazing activity for your teens to help plan and implement.

In response to the tragic and mysterious death of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority member Sandra Bland, many chapters held Know Your Rights town hall meetings, in collaboration with other Divine 9 groups, to educate community members on their rights as citizens, their rights in communication with police, and how to build stronger communities. Many teens are unaware of their own rights when it comes to confrontations with authority figures. Perhaps a conversation with teens on how to safely and effectively communicate with police, paired with a community read of “The Hate U Give,” could empower and embolden more teens to speak up and speak out where they see police brutality in their world.

Partnering with these groups can also help to broaden the impact of your teens’ ideas and projects. Large-scale social movements like assisting with recent hurricane relief efforts, or supporting the people of Flint, Michigan, in their water crisis, can be overwhelming for our teens and even ourselves as we try and condense their goals into something we can manage. Members of the Divine 9 organizations each led initiatives to provide clean bottled water and supplies to the people of Flint, some even driving them there in buses or trailers. Consider how motivating it could be for your library teens to collect donations and actually be able to meet and work with the group that is going to deliver those goods to those who need them? Or, to receive direct and personal feedback on how important their contributions are, even as teens?

Representation: The Other Arm of Social Impact

While our goal is to provide opportunity and connection for our teens, we also have to think about how important representation is in service.

As demonstrated by their joint statements and calls to action that have been released in response to the horrific incidents in Charlottesville, Virginia, as well as other civil rights issues of our current climate, the commitment to empowering individuals for change is a goal of all the groups. A commitment to instilling that passion in young people is imperative, and all of the groups have youth initiatives that may line up perfectly with your library’s programming.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, whose motto is “Culture for Service, Service for Humanity,” along with their national youth organization, the Sigma Beta Club for young men, has recently partnered with the Boy Scouts of America to work together on enhancing and enriching the lives of youth and young adults through focuses like mentorship, service, and antibullying efforts.

Project,” a playground restoration and refresh initiative where chapters are partnering with communities and park districts to clean and update local playgrounds. While many teens may want to jump headfirst into other trending topics in the news, I think it’s equally important to remind them that making a difference can be as simple as providing children with safe, inviting, and clean places to play. The AKA initiative’s goal is to restore, refresh, and renew 1,908 playgrounds by 2018.

One of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority’s national youth initiatives, the Dr. Betty Shabazz Academy, named for Delta member and widow of civil rights leader Malcolm X, exposes teen girls to cultural and STEM activities designed to prepare them to be 21st-century leaders. A program that discusses access and equity in relation to girls and education globally could

be an amazing activity for your teens to help plan and implement.

In response to the tragic and mysterious death of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority member Sandra Bland, many chapters held Know Your Rights town hall meetings, in collaboration with other Divine 9 groups, to educate community members on their rights as citizens, their rights in communication with police, and how to build stronger communities. Many teens are unaware of their own rights when it comes to confrontations with authority figures. Perhaps a conversation with teens on how to safely and effectively communicate with police, paired with a community read of “The Hate U Give,” could empower and embolden more teens to speak up and speak out where they see police brutality in their world.

Partnering with these groups can also help to broaden the impact of your teens’ ideas and projects. Large-scale social movements like assisting with recent hurricane relief efforts, or supporting the people of Flint, Michigan, in their water crisis, can be overwhelming for our teens and even ourselves as we try and condense their goals into something we can manage. Members of the Divine 9 organizations each led initiatives to provide clean bottled water and supplies to the people of Flint, some even driving them there in buses or trailers. Consider how motivating it could be for your library teens to collect donations and actually be able to meet and work with the group that is going to deliver those goods to those who need them? Or, to receive direct and personal feedback on how important their contributions are, even as teens?

Representation: The Other Arm of Social Impact

While our goal is to provide opportunity and connection for our teens, we also have to think about how important representation is in service.
important representation is in service. The majority of black Greek letter organizations were founded on the campuses of historically black colleges. However, the reason that these groups spread so far beyond just those campuses, and have chartered chapters throughout the continental United States and beyond, is because there was and continues to be a need for representation and empowerment on the campuses of predominantly white institutions and communities.

While we may do everything in our power to create equitable and welcoming spaces for all, we sometimes forget that many of our libraries happen to be predominantly white institutions as well. Although these are historically black organizations, it’s important to note that membership isn’t limited by race, and members come from a range of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. There is a great need for our minority or underrepresented teens to see community members and activists who reflect themselves and their larger world.

As part of a hip-hop program at my library, two of my friends, who happen to be members of Alpha Phi Alpha, talked to teens about how music and art can be their weapon of choice instead of guns. This program also led to a great conversation on the history of hip-hop being used for social change and impact. This opportunity served to introduce my teens to young black men whose titles ranged from business owner, musician, and social activist to photographer, and architect. A number of my teens remarked that they’d never met an architect, let alone a black one, nor had they ever thought about music from the business side. Showing our teens what they can become, and how they can use that to enrich the lives of others, is a huge part of our service to them.

Okay You’ve Convinced Me! How Do I Start?

First of all, great! I knew you were smart. Each organization has a website where you can locate the chapter or officer nearest you. A basic Google search on these groups, filtered by your city or state, may get you where you need to be, or you can always visit their national websites for information on how to move forward. Visiting these sites may also give you a deeper look into the history of each group as well as their current focuses.

I also suggest checking your community calendar. Chapters and regions hold monthly meetings and activities regularly. While most meetings are for members only, many activities and services are open to the public, and provide an opportunity for you to meet members, share your thoughts, and get to know more about what they are already doing to serve your library’s larger community. Through their own youth auxiliaries, many chapters hold teen forums, empowerment summits, and other activities where you can have your teens meet you.

In my experience partnering with the local chapter of Zeta Phi Beta sorority, I’ve been able to expose my teens to World AIDS Day, Finer Womanhood Night, a prom dress giveaway, and an upcoming poetry slam. They’ve also hosted a college fair for the library; a scholarship essay workshop, presidential debate watch parties, and undergraduate members have also made visits to my teen room to talk about college life. In every case, someone from the chapter was assigned to work with me on the logistics and even provided treats for attendees, taking a large amount of work off my shoulders and expanding my reach.

Whether you invite members of BGLOs to come in and talk to your teens about their own current initiatives, or you decide to fully partner with them on a service project or program, the support that you can receive from reaching out to your local BGLO chapters is invaluable. Connecting your teens with these individuals can start to show them that community service (and scholastic excellence) goes beyond school service hour requirements, past a note on their college admissions, and can be a real and meaningful part of their everyday lives.

My goal in many teen programs is to let the change begin with them. Providing an opportunity for these organizations to come into your library could also be a great starting point for your library to build a better relationship with them that could result in programming for adults as well. The opportunities are truly endless, and as a member of one of these organizations myself, I can honestly say, we’re so looking forward to working with you!

Great links to get you started:

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated—http://www.apa1906.net/
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated—http://www.aka1908.com
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated—http://www.oppf.org
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated—http://www.kappaalphapsi1911.com
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated—http://www.apa1906.net/
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated—http://www.phibetapsi1914.org
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated—http://zphib1920.org
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated—http://www.nphchq.org
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated—http://www.nphchq.org


REGINA TOWNSEND is the Teen Services Librarian at the Forest Park Public Library in the western suburbs of Chicago.
Encouraging Youth Activism Through Participation in Community Discussions at the Library

Josh Hem-Lee and Hadiya Evans

Overview

Youth in our country are sometimes seen as apathetic and politically disengaged, but in the aftermath of recent events that have stirred the nation’s consciousness, it is our youth who have been at the forefront of protests, marches, and the like. For proof of this, look no further than the school walkouts when the changes to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) were announced, as well as after the verdicts in several high-profile police brutality cases, which featured young African American men.

History/Genesis

Around March of 2015, coworkers and librarians James Davis and Evi Klett felt increasing feelings of professional helplessness at the social unrest visible in communities locally and nationally. On several occasions, each had conversations with library customers related to or directly about police brutality, policing policies, immigration, the uncertainty of health care, and the rising cost of housing. However, all of the interactions were squeezed in between a library-related transaction leaving each with feelings of things left unresolved. Davis and Klett felt the library could offer community members a safe place to discuss the underlying issues that drove the unrest in communities across the United States.

The Denver Public Library (DPL) is home to several internal committees, and one of these is the African American Planning Group, comprised of staff who work throughout the library system. The committee is self-appointed and members have taken the lead in planning culturally inclusive programming with an African/African American focus. It was in one of these meetings that Davis and Klett proposed the idea for a social issue-based book discussion program. Davis and Klett envisioned creating a monthly book discussion program hosted at twelve DPL locations. Each month a branch would spotlight a different social issue topic lead by a facilitator with author participation. Over the course of several meetings, the Read. Awareness. Dialogue. Action. (R.A.D.A.) planning committee was formed and took Davis and Klett’s pie-in-the-sky idea and scaled it down to something manageable. It was agreed that the discussion program would first be pilot tested at two locations with the intent to see how well it was received. With a plan in place, zero budget, a timeline, committed locations, and a list of relevant themes and topics in hand, it was just about time to take the show on the road.

It was not lost on us that two of the many high-profile cases over the past couple years involved young men: 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida in 2012 and 18-year-old Michael Brown in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. These statistics hit home not only with several members of the R.A.D.A. committee who are parents of young people of color but also for the communities the Denver Public Library serves. The tragic and premature loss of lives of these two young men ignited the spark to do more than sit on the sidelines as bystanders. The R.A.D.A. committee formed and mobilized with a mission to step up the library’s role as a safe “third space,” i.e., a space where facilitators and
community members felt comfortable initiating hard conversations of social issue-based dialogue and action. In order to establish and distinguish the program from the standard variety book clubs available at the library, it was decided that we needed to brand the book discussion program with a clear mission and unique name. After much discussion the committee decided to go with the acronym R.A.D.A. Our mission: Read to raise our social consciousness; to exchange ideas, understandings, and experiences; and to discuss actions that individuals and communities can take to address problems we are facing. Each component of the name clearly outlined what we saw and felt our community wanted, filling a need that empowered communities to speak in a safe space and trusted environment. Of the four aspects of the mission, the action component was perhaps the most important. Time is set aside at each discussion to address ways to take action in a form that makes sense to the participants. We provide a resource table with related books on the topic and organizations of note who are active. Our desire is to inspire participants to be the change they wish to see in their community. It is a common cliché, but “the youth are the future,” and it is important to give them the tools that they will need to effect social change. It was also decided early on that discussions would be open to everyone whether they read the book or not, and specifically appeal to and encourage youth participation.

As a committee we allow current events to guide how we determine the topic of the discussion that ultimately informs the book selection process. Without a dedicated budget we rely heavily on the library’s collection and draw exclusively from titles we already own that meet specific criteria: (1) fits the topic, (2) published in the last five years, (3) at least three or more copies are available in the system, and (4) written in an accessible style. The committee also actively solicits the opinions of the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) members at various branch locations. These young men and women are very forthcoming with information and ideas about what they feel are topics of importance and value.

Structure of the Discussion

Early in the planning stages of R.A.D.A. we realized as a committee in difficult and often uncomfortable conversations.

R.A.D.A. Discussion Guidelines:

- Listen actively, seek first to understand
- Keep an open mind
- Be respectful and honest in communication
- Be mindful of others and do not dominate the discussion
- Speak your truth without blame or judgment
- Critique ideas not people

Involving youth in discussions of this nature can only benefit them, not the least of which is that they develop public speaking skills, debate skills, and perhaps most importantly, critical thinking skills.

The rules are covered and displayed in a prominent place at the start of each discussion, as a friendly but firm reminder of ways to keep the discussion on track.

Reaching Our Audiences: Teens and Adults

Anyone who has ever interacted with teens know that like their adult counterparts, they are a very heterogeneous demographic of library customers. On average the Denver Public Library offers over twenty-five teen-focused events a year with more programming available during the summer months. To ensure that the R.A.D.A. discussion program includes teen participants we have made a conscious effort to first and foremost leverage the already existing relationships we have with youth at our branches. Many of our teen customers have
grown up with us from after-school programs to TAB, and even volunteering and summer jobs. We also reached out to area schools and, specifically, teachers at said schools. Over the years librarians have cultivated relationships with teachers through school visits and the like. Some high school social studies teachers and guidance counselors encourage their students to attend events such as these for extra credit.

Also, some branches in the DPL system see huge influxes of teens every day after school as they do homework, socialize, and help care for younger siblings. These are ready-made audiences of sorts and ones that we readily tap strive to add different perspectives to the discussions.

In addition to using the committee’s extensive professional network, the committee is fortunate to have access to a dedicated in-house print and graphic design shop that creates and disseminates large quantities of flyers, and a hardworking marketing and communications department that assists in the promotion of the many events held system wide. We also rely on a variety of social media and Web-based platforms to help get the word out. Facebook, online calendars, and blog posts make it extremely easy to link, post, and repost.

One of the first books the R.A.D.A. committee chose as part of our pilot test was *The Griots of Oakland: Voices from the African American Oral History Project* by Angela Zusman, which featured young men in Oakland California as they talked about their daily life, hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future. The discussion on this book featured a wide cross-section of the community, some of whom were young men from the Denver community. As a committee we are continuously searching for way to engage youth participants. At this particular discussion, at the invitation of the cofounder James Davis, several students from the mentoring organization that Davis is a part of attended. They were very forthright as they talked about how they perceive themselves, how people see them, and what they think about the problems and changes in their community. It was not lost on participants that the branch in which this discussion was held was named after activist Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales. In a serendipitous moment of fortune, the author Angela Zusman, who is executive director and founder of the *Story For All Project*, found information about the discussion online while searching for something else and was able to connect via a Skype call. Some of the youth at this discussion were a bit hesitant to pose questions to the author, but with some gentle encouragement from those present soon loosened up! Some teens were quite content to sit and observe while
others were more involved and vocal. We support participation at whatever level our attendees feel comfortable.

Fast forward two years since its inception and the R.A.D.A. discussion program has taken off and reached audiences well past expectations. To date eight discussions have been hosted in communities across Denver, covering topics ranging from mental health to the prison industrial complex to immigration. Some books, however, naturally generate a buzz, and by hosting a discussion around the book we can tap into the buzz for easier marketing. Although most of the books we use tend to be nonfiction, *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely surged to the top of bestseller lists last year making it an easy choice that would appeal to a diverse audience including teens. The R.A.D.A. committee partnered with a local Denver bookstore, Tattered Cover, to host a discussion featuring both authors. The novel follows the storyline of two young men, one black and the other white, and the events that follow from a specific incident of police brutality that put one on the receiving end and the other on the witnessing end of the altercation.

A powerful discussion doesn’t begin to summarize things. Reynolds and Kiely were able to take an audience of 100 and make it feel like you were having a deep conversation with friends while sitting around a kitchen table. The discussion tackled hard conversations around race, privilege, and perception. We have been very fortunate to connect on several occasions with the authors. Although we would love to be able to host authors for each discussion, this is not financially feasible nor our objective. At the end of the day, providing a space to examine and unpack topics like police brutality in a safe space remain the goal of each discussion.

The Artist and Scribe: Documenting the Discussion

No project of this size can occur without the help of many partners, and the R.A.D.A. committee was fortunate early on to count on the help of Denver-based strategic illustrator Kriss Wittman. She was able to chronicle in real time the various discussions that were held. Wittman describes the process as “a perfect tool for bridging an event’s experience with the world of visual thinking to illuminate key concepts, different perspectives, decisions and the collective input of the participants.” Thus, the R.A.D.A. committee was able to chronicle the happenings in a nonlinear fashion. This method also allowed us to circumvent any privacy issues or concerns as one of our policies is that we obtain a waiver from minors before we take or publish images.

The Denver Public Library is fortunate to have not one but two departments...
dedicated to preserving history and artifacts. The Western History and Genealogy Department and the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library (the latter is the only one of its kind between Detroit and California) have active archives that collect the unique history of Colorado and the West. Plans are in place to have the many documents, drawings, and artifacts preserved and/or digitized for future generations to access.

Evaluating the Program
As we evaluate the program we look at the numbers of people who attended, and, like most programs, attendance tends to fluctuate depending on the topic and the book (for example, the All American Boys discussion had more than 100 people). We have also been trying to measure the program’s impact in the community. Some of these outcomes may not be seen for some time as youth mature and begin to become active in their community. One positive thing that we have observed is that youth are using the library space for different reasons now instead of checking out materials, gaming, or spending time with their peers.

Conclusion
Programs such as these are slowly but surely becoming more common, especially in larger urban libraries where various issues impact different parts of the city. Involving youth in discussions of this nature can only benefit them not, not the least of which is that they develop public speaking skills, debate skills, and perhaps most importantly, critical thinking skills. All the aforementioned can only serve them well and put them on good footing in the future. As the R.A.D.A. program enters its third year of existence, we are increasingly enthusiastic that it can continue to impact the city of Denver and spark meaningful discussions about some of the many issues that plague our city.

We have gained valuable support from our leadership. Michelle Jeske, City Librarian of the Denver Public Library, described the R.A.D.A. program as “a stellar example of using insight gained from our community engagement/deep listening work done neighborhood by neighborhood to determine hyperlocal topics of concern and interest for dialogue at a branch library. The fact that the topic and dialogue are based around a book makes it even more exciting! I’m very proud of the work of the R.A.D.A. team.” As a committee we remain hopeful of fulfilling James Davis and Evie Klett’s grand vision to have R.A.D.A. discussions held at every branch of the Denver Public Library. We feel strongly that each sector of the city has teens whose input should be heard, valued, respected, and recorded.

JOSH HEM-LEE is a Librarian and HADIYA EVANS is a Library Program Associate with the Denver Public Library; both are members of the Read. Awareness. Dialogue. Action. (R.A.D.A.) planning committee.
As a high school English teacher in East Nashville, I witness daily the impact literacy has on our communities. When students can read and write well there is no limit to what they can accomplish. Unfortunately, when they can’t, their options in life are severely limited.

That’s why my mission is simple: to inspire my students to become passionate and proficient readers and writers who possess the literacy skills needed to choose their path upon graduation. I try my best to block out the noise and approach every day, every lesson with that goal in mind.

Unfortunately, my students and I face several challenges that make it harder for us to read as often as we’d like. When asked to reflect on their biggest barriers to reading, my students ranked technology and social media addiction number one. (To be clear, this isn’t just a teenage problem; all of us could probably name a few teachers who have gone years without reading a book.)

Other reading obstacles included the following:

- Lack of time, from sports and band practice and afterschool jobs to responsibilities at home and, of course, homework.
- Lack of interest, motivation, and/or confidence.
- Lack of reading role models, both inside and outside of school.
- Lack of quiet, comfortable places to read, again both inside and outside of school.

And, there was one more challenge my students and I didn’t fully consider until reading this article (https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/07/where-books-are-nonexistent/491282/): limited book access.

As the researchers stated, “When there are no books, or when there are so few that choice is not an option, book reading becomes an occasion and not a routine.”

This is the problem my students and I have been working tirelessly to solve for the past year. And that is why we started Project LIT Community—to increase book access and promote a love of reading in our schools and communities.

Our first step was to launch a book drive, and thanks to our students’ successful social media campaign, we collected more than 10,000 books by the end of 2016. From there, we began to place those books in our LIT libraries, converted USA Today newsstands, which we set up in local community centers and YMCAs.

However, we soon realized that the solution wasn’t simply to increase book access, it was to increase access to high-quality, culturally relevant books. Books that allow all students to see themselves in the pages. Books that communicate to all students that their voices and their stories matter—that they matter. Books that spark difficult, but necessary conversations and effect change. Books that help promote empathy and kindness and invite us to look at the world through a different lens.
Table: Mr. Amato’s Top 10 Tips for Creating a Positive Reading Culture

1. Give students **consistent** time to read.
2. Give students **choice**.
3. Increase access to **high-quality, culturally relevant** books.
4. Create a nurturing **reading environment**.
5. Be a reading **role model**.
6. Know your students—**relationships** matter!
7. Instill a **growth mindset** in students and help them set **personalized** reading goals.
8. Encourage **reflection**.
9. Discuss and **celebrate** reading. **ALL. THE. TIME.**
10. **Don’t give up.**

However, we soon realized that the solution wasn’t simply to increase book access—it was to increase access to high-quality, culturally relevant books. Books that allow all students to see themselves in the pages. Books that communicate to all students that their voices and their stories matter—that they matter. Books that spark difficult, but necessary conversations and effect change.

Books that inspire students to fall in love with reading again or for the first time.

And with that in mind, we started Project LIT Book Club. In its simplest form, it’s a monthly opportunity for students, teachers, and community members to come together in our library to eat breakfast (shout out to Krispy Kreme), discuss themes and takeaways from amazing books like *All American Boys* and *The Hate U Give*, and test our close reading skills in a trivia competition.

But, it’s also an opportunity to empower our students (they gain valuable real-world skills as they plan and facilitate every aspect of the event) and engage our community in a meaningful way. Reading too often is a solitary experience, and Project LIT book club makes it a shared one.

As we enter year two, we’re beginning to connect with schools and communities across the country. Thanks to the power of social media, we’ve started a national, grassroots literacy movement. Project LIT Community is now a network of passionate teachers and students in more than fifty schools and twenty states working together to increase access to diverse books and promote a love of reading (and yes, we’d love for you and your students to join us!).

All Project LIT sites believe that all children will become skilled, lifelong readers if they have access to high-interest, culturally relevant books along with daily opportunities to read and discuss these books with caring peers and adults.

Furthermore, we are committed to:
1. flooding classrooms, schools, and communities with diverse books;
2. bringing our communities together to celebrate and discuss these books; and
3. inspiring and supporting one another in our effort to improve reading attitudes and outcomes.

While each site works to address the unique literacy needs of its community, the Project LIT Book Club selections are what bring all of us together. Log on to Twitter and you’ll find pictures of students, teachers, and community members across the country—from Nashville and New York to Denver and St. Louis—reading, discussing, and celebrating great books every day.

**Student Vignettes**

**David N.**

Book deserts are on the rise, and my classmates and I decided to take matters into our own hands and do something about it. Many don’t realize that our future generation is living a life without books, and we as a community have to come together in order to save our society.

Project LIT community is fighting to decrease and eventually eliminate book deserts. Our work is needed in today’s society, where kids are more likely to consider a phone over a book. Our job is to do away with that mindset, so that our future can be brighter than the moon at night.

Honestly, I never saw books as a source to a better future, but my teacher, Mr. Amato, worked with me closely to understand the power of reading. I realized
that many people are living in classrooms and communities without books, and I’m sitting here neglecting them. I started picking out my favorite books and immediately I was hooked.

I never would have started reading without the help of this organization, and now it is an honor to spread that love for books with our community. Kids need examples out there, people who bring hope into their lives. Many children crave a book to own and keep but don’t have that luxury. Fortunately, we can fix that.

I am most proud of the hard work and dedication we have put into this organization over the past year. It is not common to see students bond together like we have. We are determined to save the next generation, and we encourage other communities to join our movement.

Calvin P.

Project LIT Community started last fall when an article appeared about book deserts and our teacher, Mr. Amato, decided to do something about it. He asked us, his students, what we would do to fix this. From collecting more than 15,000 books and converting twenty newstands into LIT libraries to hosting a monthly community-wide book club, this project has taught me fundamental skills such as teamwork, communication, and persistence.

At first this project was just an idea, but through hard work and determination we have lifted it to amazing heights. After school, I have helped place our LIT libraries in several locations, including YMCAs and community centers, and it has been during these trips that I have built bonds with my fellow project managers.

Project LIT has helped us managers learn how to not only create a nonprofit business but how to maintain one. These skills will benefit us later in life as we, the business owners of tomorrow, eventually start our own companies.

Most of all, this project makes you understand how important reading is to the youth, and for that matter, adults. I know firsthand how hard it can be to read when there are no books around, so for us to bring books in and make them accessible to all children is a great thing. We hope that this project spreads to schools across the nation and eventually the globe. Reading truly is universal.

Jakaylia S.

Reading has always been a hobby of mine, but after starting this project, I gained a greater appreciation for reading and was motivated to read even more. I have also learned how important it is to give back. I’m most proud of how far we’ve come as group and how quickly everything took off. I feel like I’ve grown along with Project LIT, and I’m proud to be a part of it.

I learned to be a team player and to be a better communicator. I’m normally a
Rodrea B.

As the founders of Project LIT Community, we take book deserts seriously and want adults and children to have the same resources and opportunities that we have when it comes to reading. When it comes to reading, I am the biggest fan, but I know that everyone is so lucky. I hope that we show students that there is nothing wrong with being a bookworm and getting excited when a book is put into your hands.

Project LIT Community is like another family to me. It’s an organization I’m proud to say I’m a part of. I’ve learned to be quick on my feet in this organization, and I am a better multitasker, especially in managing time while dealing with the daily struggles at home. We have been successful because people have noticed that we are trying to put a stop to something that we all agree is harmful and should not be happening. We faced some challenges along the way, but as a team, we got through it and kept moving forward.

My favorite thing about Project LIT Community is our book clubs. Just being able to talk about a book that you really like and get the questions you want to ask answered and connecting with multiple people is exciting. The Project LIT book clubs are just that: LIT! Everyone is enjoying themselves and having fun. There is no negativity once you walk through the double doors of the library, and that’s the great thing about it. There is no fighting or arguing; just smiles and laughter. Personally, I am ready for more great book clubs and hopefully some opportunities to meet the authors of the amazing books we’ve read.

David J.

Project LIT Community is an organization my classmates and I created to help children around the world. There are places in this world where there isn’t any access to books; these places are called “book deserts,” and our job in Project LIT is to eliminate those book deserts. It is very important for children to have access to books or they won’t be successful.

So, how is Project LIT important? Project LIT eliminates book deserts and provides people with books so they can be successful in life. Through this experience, I learned that you can help people in many ways and it’s pretty easy. I also learned that helping people feels good. I feel like people’s futures are in our hands and if we eliminate all the book deserts, then they’ll be successful.

I’m proud of all our progress. I remember when we were in class talking about starting Project LIT and now we’ve completed our goals of collecting books, building little libraries, and hosting book clubs. We’ve done lots of things in Project LIT, but the thing I would remember the most is when some of my classmates and I went to Lipscomb University and met Kwame Alexander; he’s the author of *Crossover* and *Booked*, two of our book club selections.

Ever since we’ve started Project LIT, it has changed my perspective on reading. I enjoy reading more than I did before and I’m reading more even when I’m not in class. Project LIT also helped me improve my vocabulary, communication, patience, collaboration, and creativity.

The future of Project LIT is very bright—I can see it now: LIT libraries on corners, in hospitals, in community centers, and people walking up to them and getting books out. I can also see other teachers and students starting Project LIT in their schools.
What do we mean by youth activism? Youth activism takes place when youth take “deliberate, strategic and powerful action to draw attention to issues that matter to them [and] which benefit their communities,” thus bringing about social change (https://freechild.org/strategies/). The issues might be local, such as ending zero-tolerance disciplinary policies or providing lead-free drinking water in their schools; national, such as supporting DREAMers or advocating for mental health care for teens who are experiencing homelessness; or international, such as expanding access to education for girls or ending ethnic cleansing. The actions might range from fundraising, to launching a community action or social media campaign, to speaking to national or international leaders.

Youth activism can be organic and instantaneous. For example, a group of teens might be frustrated that their community center is closed on the weekends and decide to advocate to the town council to keep it open. Or, it can be more sustained and occur in more formal settings such as school clubs (e.g., a GSA or a civics club), youth-based community organizations (e.g., a Boys and Girls Club or local chapters of the NAACP Youth Divisions), or national and international organizations (e.g., Hip Hop Congress or DoSomething.org).

What role can libraries play in supporting youth activism?

• Youth need to learn about the issues that are affecting their communities, the nation, and the world. They need to understand why the issues exist, examine a variety of viewpoints about the issues, identify who is currently involved in tackling these issues, find out what people have already tried, locate people who are experts, and determine obstacles to solving the issues (https://www.icivics.org/viewpdf.html?path=/sites/default/files/CountySolutions-ActivityiCivics.pdf). To do this they need to engage in research, study, and critique (https://freechild.org/youth-led-activism/). Sounds a lot like inquiry—inquiry with a real world purpose! And will require information literacy skills—definitely skills libraries can help teens develop!

• Youth need to be able to collaborate with others. They need to learn skills such as how to run a meeting, how to manage a project, and how to be a leader (and a follower). The kinds of 21st-century skills library programs and services foster!

• Youth need training on how to communicate their concerns and solutions to others, whether that be other youth who care about the same issues, community groups, decision-makers, or government entities. This might entail learning how to make an infographic or PSA, prepare a PowerPoint presentation, organize a social media campaign, or host an unconference—again, all skills libraries can help teens develop!

• Youth need mentors and allies—other youth and adults who are passionate about issues, who are unafraid to take a stand, and who recognize that their voices matter. Connecting youth to others is a key strength of libraries!

• Youth need examples of youth-led activism—they need to hear powerful stories of youth changing the world! YouTube, other social media, and many other resources can provide important stories that will inspire youth to take action in their own communities. Locating, curating resources, and connecting youth to resources are what libraries do!

The list of ways libraries can support youth activism through community engagement goes on!

At the end of the day, I guess I am an optimist. With all the turmoil occurring in the world today, it would be easy to become despondent, to give up. But, I truly believe we can change the world for the better and that our youth are our future. I have a teen-aged son. He and his friends amaze me every day with their compassion, their insight, their optimism, and their motivation to make the world a better place. Through this theme, I believe libraries will give teens the tools they need to create a better now and a better future for all of us.
Atlantic Publishing is a new leader in the young adult nonfiction book market. All of our young adult titles align with state and national common core standards and are equipped with a Lexile measurement, making it easy for you to place orders based on age requirements and need. Our youthful, yet experienced writers and editors are in-tune with what captures the interest of teens. These action-packed and easy-to-read books are sure to stimulate any young reader’s short attention span. The pages are full of humor and fast facts that showcase the interesting details about the historical subject at hand. We are excited to offer a PDF sample of any book you’d like to delve into.

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The YALSA Update

YALSA at the ALA Midwinter Meeting
Check out what YALSA has going on at the ALA Midwinter Meeting, February 9–12 in Denver, Colorado, by visiting the wiki, and follow along with the activities by checking the YALSA blog and the #alamw18 and #alayma hashtags. https://tinyurl.com/YALSAMW18

Apply by March 1 for the Spectrum Scholar Program
YALSA is sponsoring two Spectrum Scholars this year, which provides funds to individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue their MLIS degree. Learn more and access the application at http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum/apply

Teen Tech Week™ 2018: Libraries are for Creating
Celebrate Teen Tech Week, March 4–10, with the theme “Libraries are for creating.” This year’s theme encourages teens to take advantage of all the great digital tools offered through the library to become content creators, and to leverage library resources to share out their creations, whether they be podcasts, videos, apps, games, wearable tech, or some other fabulous invention or creation!

Sign up for a free account on the official Teen Tech Week website to download the themed digital poster, bookmark, available in Chinese, English, and Spanish. On the site, library staff can also access planning and promotional resources, as well as exchange ideas with fellow colleagues.

Upcoming Leadership E-Courses
In 2018–2019 YALSA will be offering a series of e-courses focused on leadership to help library staff advance their leadership skills, regardless of job type or level. In 2016, the Nexus Leading Across Boundaries project released the Layers of Leadership framework that included six layers to consider in order to develop leadership skills and take on an active role as a leader in an organization—local, state, regional, or national. In this e-learning series, each area of the framework will be explored:

• Building Basic Leadership Skills, January 22 to February 18, 2018
• Next Step Leadership
• Leading Beyond the Library Walls

A limited number of scholarships will be available for individuals who demonstrate a financial need. Please direct questions to: Linda W. Braun, YALSA’s CE Consultant, at lbraun@leonline.com or 917-847-7804. Learn more at www.ala.org/yalsa/onlinelarning/info.

Apply by February 1 to Serve on a Strategic Committee, Advisory Board, or Task Force
Want to update your skills, get leadership opportunities, or be a part of moving YALSA forward while networking with your other colleagues? Serve on one of YALSA’s strategic committees, advisory boards or task forces!

President-elect Crystle Martin will appoint members for 2018–2019. Groups include:

• AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation
• Division and Membership Promotion Committee
• Editorial Advisory Board (YALS/YALSAblog)
• Financial Advancement Committee
• JRLYA Advisory Board
• Organization and Bylaws Committee
• Research Committee
• Summer Learning Committee
• Teens’ Top Ten Committee
• The Hub Advisory Board
• YA Symposium Planning + Marketing Taskforce

Submit a Program or Paper Proposal for YALSA’s 2018 YA Services Symposium
The call for programs and paper proposals for the 2018 Symposium, which will take place November 2–4 in Salt Lake City, Utah, at the Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel are now open. The theme of the symposium is “Zeroing In: Focusing on Teen Needs.” The symposium will explore how libraries can best support teens’ social and emotional learning to help them effectively navigate a challenging world.

Programs at the symposium will cover the entire spectrum of topics related to providing services for and with young adults. YALSA is seeking proposals that highlight best or emerging practices for libraries of all sizes and capacities in the following categories:

• Programs and services (including planning, implementing, and evaluating)
• Collections and content curation
• Digital and print literacies
• Youth participation
• Partnering/Collaborations
• Equity and inclusion
• Outreach

Learn more and submit a program proposal or paper proposal by February 1, 2018 at www.ala.org/yalsa/yasymposium.
What to Know Before You Volunteer
Before you volunteer to serve on a committee, advisory board, or task force, you’ll want to learn about the tasks and responsibilities of each group. Check out the Committee FAQs at www.ala.org/yalsa/committee-faq.

On the YALSA website, you’ll also find information about each of group’s functions, size, and more. Start your research at www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/yalsacommittee. Lastly, be sure to read through YALSA’s Handbook, especially the sections that list responsibilities for committee members. View it at www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsahandbook.

Complete the Volunteer Form
To be considered for any committee, advisory board, or task force, please fill out a volunteer form. It is available online (go to www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsahandbook and choose “Committee Volunteer Form”). When filling out the form, please be sure to include the name of the groups that you’d most like to serve on. If you don’t indicate a few that you’re particularly interested in, it is very difficult for the president-elect to find the best fit for you. Forms are only kept on file for one year, so it’s important that you fill one out each year that you would like to serve on a committee, advisory board, or task force.

Timeline
Applications will be accepted through February 1. Once submitted, you should receive an automated e-mail confirmation from YALSA. Appointments will be made by the president-elect in February and March 2018. Please do not expect to hear from Crystle Martin before March. For updates on the appointments process, check the YALSAblog (yalsa.ala.org/blog/). If appointed, your term begins July 1, 2018.

The Fine Print
All of YALSA’s strategic committees are virtual appointments, meaning you do not need to attend the Annual Conference or Midwinter Meeting to serve on a committee. The exception is the Symposium Local Arrangements Committee. YALSA is seeking individuals in the Salt Lake City area who can attend and help out with the event. Committee and advisory board appointments are one-year terms, while task force appointments are three- or six-month terms. Some groups are very popular and may receive dozens of volunteer forms for just two or three available spots. Your membership in YALSA must be current in order for you to be eligible to serve on a committee, advisory board, or task force.

Questions? Please contact Crystle Martin at crystle.martin@gmail.com or YALSA’s Membership Manager, Letitia Smith, at lsmith@ala.org.

To learn about other ways to build your professional skills and/or get more involved in YALSA, please visit www.ala.org/yalsa/getinvolved/getinvolved.

2018 YALSA Book Awards and Lists
This year, the Youth Media Awards will take place Monday, February 12, at ALA’s Midwinter Meeting in Denver. For information on how to view the announcement live online, visit www.ala.org/news/mediapresscenter/preskits/ymapk. Be sure to keep your eyes peeled that Monday for the winners of all ALA book awards, including YALSA’s Alex, Edwards, Morris, Nonfiction, Odyssey, and Printz Awards. Additionally, mid-February, you can also check out YALSA’s 2018 Best Fiction for Young Adults and Great Graphic Novels for Teens lists. The Amazing Audiobooks and Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers lists were posted in late December at tinyurl.com/yalsa bookawards-lists.

In late February, be sure to visit www.ala.org/yalsa/best to find downloadable tools to promote winners at your library, part of YALSA’s new Best of the Best! You’ll be able to download customizable bookmarks featuring the winners of the 2018 Alex, Edwards, Morris, Nonfiction, Odyssey, and Printz Awards. You can also download logos to use on your website or in marketing materials in your library, spine labels to apply to titles that appear in the Best of the Best, and other tools to promote the awards, as well as the Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults, Best Fiction for Young Adults, Great Graphic Novels for Teens, and Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers.
Become a Friend of YALSA

Friends of YALSA (FOY) was created to ensure excellence in the Association’s traditional programs and services to library workers serving teens and to support growth in new directions as our profession meets the exciting challenges of the 21st century.

Each year, FOY funds are used to support over $16,000 in member scholarships, grants and stipends, including a Spectrum Scholar and Emerging Leader. Funds also support areas such as advocacy, continuous learning, research, planning for the future and teen literacy & young adult literature.

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