YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, San Diego
January 7 – 11, 2011

Topic: **Teen Space Guidelines Draft**

Background: **In the spring of 2010 the Board voted to establish a taskforce to "develop a full set of guidelines for teen spaces in public libraries using the existing draft guidelines as a starting point as well as any existing best practices. Submit the latest draft to the YALSA Executive Committee for discussion and feedback at their October meeting. Following feedback from the Executive Committee, the Task Force was asked make final revisions to the guidelines and submit them by December 7th in preparation for the YALSA Board meeting at Midwinter 2011."**

Action Required: **Discussion**

Teen Space Guidelines Task Force Report
Revised – December 2010

The Teen Spaces Guidelines (revisions) Task Force respectfully submits this new report to the YALSA Board as the next step in creating standards for teen spaces. As suggested by the YALSA Board we have tightened the focus to cover only public libraries, added a section on teen staffing, added references to ADA standards, tightened up awkward phrasing, and reworded areas in need of clarification. The task force's next steps are to confirm he guidelines are in alignment with the Teen Spaces white paper, contact Kim Cullen for review, and write a proper introduction.

The original task force suggested the following: That possible future development focus on creating a detailed toolkit for planning, developing, and evaluating teen spaces. To assist in a basic understanding of current and developing teen spaces we also recommend that YALSA conduct a regular survey of their membership regarding teen spaces. This task force explored the concept of physical library space for teens – the development of true third places for teenagers. We recommend that virtual library space for teens be addressed in the future with the goal of setting standards for interactive online teen spaces. Finally, the task force would like YALSA to consider the development of an award for an outstanding teen space.

To this, the current Task Force would like to add the suggestion that YALSA develop a matrix to assist librarians in development of their teen spaces.

Teens deserve library spaces created by them and for them. Successful teen spaces in libraries provide welcoming environments in which to learn, create, interact, express, grow,

and develop. Kimberly Bolan in her groundbreaking book <u>Teen Spaces</u>, states that "a first-rate teen space should have the ability to fit into a teen's life, meeting the variety of needs and uses essential for this age group" (p. 11). Teen spaces encourage teens to explore their individuality as well as their relationship to their community and offer not only basic library service but assistance in the development of healthy persons. Teen spaces reinforce the idea that teens are valued members of society with relevant interests and contributions, to staff, adult patrons, and teens themselves.

I. Teen Involvement
Teen spaces must be developed and maintained with teen involvement. Input for developing and improving the space should be obtained from teen users and non-users through a variety of methods including surveys, focus groups, advisory groups, informal dialogue, and observation among others. See Appendix A for sample survey questions. The more responsibility in planning teens have for their library space, the more successful that space will be with teens.

II. Research, Planning, Evaluation
A current teen community profile should be maintained at all times. This profile will include information such as population and other teen related statistics, services available for teens in the community, places where teens gravitate to gather and enjoy themselves, and other community organizations that may be interested in partnering in the development, maintenance, and improvement of the teen space.
A staff evaluation of the current teen space and the relationship of that space to the entire library should be conducted annually in the process of setting goals for future development. See Appendix B for sample questions for staff in their regular evaluations. Staff should work with teens to maintain short-term and long-term plans for updating and improving the teen space.
Some simple steps to keep the teen space fresh and dynamic include:

- Rearranging the furniture
- Bringing unused furniture from other areas of the library to the teen space
- Repairing/removing furniture from the teen space that is worn or dated
- Locate inexpensive teen friendly furniture to add to the teen space
- Adding teen artwork to decorate the space
- Request donations of board games or other interactive activities
- Freshen the collection by cleaning the books and weeding
- Merchandise the collection through displays that change often; empower teens to merchandise the collection

Reach out for support from community members in helping with planning, creating, and re-creating dynamic teen spaces. See Appendix C for suggested community persons and organizations.

III. Environment
An excellent teen space environment . . .

- Is attractive, welcoming and comfortable

- Is easily identified as the teen space
- Is capable of handling a high noise level
- Is flexible
- Is reflective of the 40 Developmental Assets created by the Search Institute (see Appendix D).
- Is a multifunctional space allowing for the varying needs of developing teens including reading, socializing, meeting, Internet use, entertainment, eating, collaborative work, group study, creative expression, interactive activity such as gaming, relaxing
- Is easily supervised by library staff
- Is composed of sufficient shelving with a diverse and current collection
- Is merchandising friendly
- Is current in the effective incorporation of technology with computer access proportional to the teen population
- Is current in the effective inclusion of a wide spectrum of printed materials of teen interest

IV. Guidelines

Teen input continues to be necessary in the creation of guidelines or policies for the use of the teen space. Positive customer-oriented guidelines that encourage meaningful participation in the shared space and maintain structure and clear limits will allow for positive interactions for teens with peers and adults. In addition, the library should have clear policy statements displayed in a prominent space concerning the right to free access by teens to the resources of the library.

V. Location

Ideally the location of teen spaces will be easily found by teens. The space should be easily monitored by library staff. The children's area of the library should be distinct and completely separate from the teen space. If possible, the teen space location should allow for future growth.

VI. Size

The size of a teen space should be based on demographics – the total community population to the total teen population. Kimberly Bolan recommends in <u>Teen Spaces</u> that the ratio of teen space square footage to the overall library square footage should be equal to the ratio of the teen population of the community to the overall population of the community.

VII. Furnishings
Teen spaces should include . . .

- Shelving for materials in various formats
- Comfortable and durable seating options
- Clear directional and informational signs
- Listening and viewing equipment for a variety of formats

- Display equipment such as bulletin boards,
- Adequate number of recycling and trash receptacles
- Appropriate flooring
- Attractive and colorful décor
- Food and beverage sources such as vending machines with a choice of healthy items

VIII. Staffing

A dynamic teen space needs dedicated professional staff to work with the teens. All library staff should have a basic understanding of adolescent development and be ready to provide excellent customer service to the teens who utilize the teen space. In public libraries, this can be challenging as staff size is limited and some employees may feel uncomfortable working with teenagers. Libraries should provide in-house training which includes pairing staff with different strengths during the first months of opening a teen area, bringing able teen volunteers into the library as mentors to staff and users, and asking the users themselves to take ownership of the area through material selection, advisory board creation, and drawing up behavior expectations and consequences for users.

Ideally, libraries with a space dedicated to teens should also have at least one professional librarian on staff, preferably full-time. The amount of hours this individual should work and when those hours should be, will vary greatly depending on the community and the behavior of its teen population. The teen librarian should be on staff during high traffic times as well as during down time to plan programs, develop and maintain the teen collection, read professional literature and complete other essential tasks as necessary. "YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best" outlines the knowledge and skills necessary for a librarian to possess in order to provide adequate and quality service to teens. Much of the knowledge and skills outlined in this document are learned by individuals who specifically pursue the Masters of Science in Library Science or the Masters of Library and Information Science degree, and focus their course of study on teen librarianship. Teens have very different needs than adult patrons and different developmental needs than children. As such, it is essential that when they patronize the library they be greeted with professional staff that understands and can meet these unique needs.

IX. Infrastructure
The library's infrastructure should support technology and provide adequate lighting, ventilation, climate controls, electrical outlets, acoustics, and safety. The library should also ensure that ADA standards will be maintained or exceeded (see Appendix E). Wireless Internet access should be available with the flexibility to upgrade as technology changes.

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Appendix A
Sample Survey Questions

Feedback from teens is critical in the development or redesign of a teen library space. Below are sample questions that may be useful on a teen survey.

1) Where do you like to spend time?
   a. At home
   b. At the mall
   c. At a coffee shop or café
   d. At my friends' houses
   e. Online
   f. Other _____

2) What is it about this space that makes it inviting? (Check all that apply). It is…
   a. Quiet /Calm
   b. Noisy / Busy
   c. Organized
   d. Messy
   e. A place where I can interact with others.
   f. A place where I can be left alone.
   g. Other _____

3) How often do you visit the ABC Library?
   a. Every day
   b. A few times a week
   c. A few times a month
   d. A few times a year
   e. Never

4) How often do you visit the ABC Library's Teen Area?
   a. Every day
   b. A few times a week
   c. A few times a month
   d. A few times a year
   e. Never

5) What do you do when you visit the Teen Area? Check all that apply.
   a. Look for books and magazines
   b. Use the computers
   c. Hang out with friends
   d. Study in groups
   e. Participate in programs

    f.   Other _____

6) What would you like to see added to the Teen Area?
    a.   More seating
    b.   More computers
    c.   Gaming stations/consoles
    d.   More books/magazines/CDs/DVDs for teens
    e.   Enclosed area for special activities
    f.   Other_____

7) What kind of seating would you like to have in the Teen Area?
    a.   Comfy lounge chairs
    b.   Floor seating (low-to-the-ground couches, bean bag chairs, etc.)
    c.   Booths (diner-style)
    d.   Café-style seating
    e.   Other_____

8) What type of style would you like to see in the Teen Area? Describe the look you'd like to see. From the furnishings to the paint colors to the wall decorations. What would you like it to look like?

9) What is the best thing about the current Teen Area?

10) What is the worst thing about the current Teen Area?

11) What could we add to the Teen Area that would attract more teens?

12) Do the rules of the Teen Area seem appropriate to you? What changes would you make to the rules?

13) What other changes and improvements would you like to see in the Teen Area?

14) What do you think about the name for the Teen Area?
    a.   I like it.
    b.   It is ok.
    c.   I hate it.
    d.   No opinion.

15) Would you like to name/rename the Teen Area? List your suggestions for a new name for the teen area.

Appendix B
Sample Staff Evaluation Questions

Below are some questions to ask yourself when you're considering the development or redesign of a library teen space.

1) When was the last time you made a significant change to the decor or layout of your teen space?
2) Over the past 10 years, how many times has your library's teen space been redecorated or redesigned?
3) How well does your current space accommodate the collection?
4) How well does your current space accommodate teen patrons?
5) Does your current space allow for programs and activities?
6) Who contributed to the design of your teen space? - A consultant? Teens? Other library staff? Parents or adult community members?
7) Does the ratio of your teen space area to the area of the entire library equal the ratio of the teen population to the overall population of your community?
8) How can you involve your teens in the development or redesign of your teen space? An online survey of teen patrons? Paper survey of teen patrons? Discussion with Teen Advisory Group volunteers? Special focus groups with local teens?
9) Do you have the support of your library or school administration? How can you encourage their support? Can you organize a group of teens to present at a board meeting?

Appendix C
Suggested Community Involvement Strategies
Identified below are several segments of the community who can be helpful in developing teen spaces. Suggestions for their involvement are also included.

1. Teens

If you have a Teen Advisory Board (TAB), you already have a great resource. Let the teens work with staff to choose color schemes and give input on furniture and design selections. They can often supply information that library staff would not consider otherwise. When one of the libraries in our District was planning an enclosed teen space, one teen girl commented, "My mom would never let me go in there without an adult present." Library staff had to consider whether they would need to have a staff member in the enclosed area, or if strategic placement of windows and service desks would be enough.

It's important to get input from different groups of teens. The kids who already hang out at the library are certainly going to have lots of great input, but it's also helpful to talk to kids who don't come to the library at all. Your adult patrons may be able to link you up with church groups, 4H Clubs, or other organizations that grant access to teens.

Not only can your teen advisory board offer direct input, but they can suggest ways to approach other teens. For example, would kids come to an open brainstorming meeting at the library, or should such a meeting be held at a local hangout? Perhaps there is a design class at the high school that could take your teen space on as a project. There might be a Scout group

who can build furniture. What about social networking – is there a way to get online input from a wider circle of teens? The TAB functions as your inside track to your local teen community. The members themselves can act as the library's interface with the teen community by conducting meetings, developing electronic polls, or simply by talking about the teen space plans with their friends.

If you don't presently have a TAB you may be able to form one around the task of creating a new teen space. You may be able to enlist the support of teachers, who are sometimes looking for real life projects as class assignments. In addition, many teens need community service hours. Involvement in planning a teen space could not only count as required community service hours, but offer a true community experience that can be included in college entrance essays. And while your teen spaces committee can be established to operate for a limited period of time, you may end up with the beginnings of a more lasting TAB.

Contests are a great way to get teens involved. Offer to implement the best elements of teen submissions, with a sign in the finished area that acknowledges the teens' contributions. For example, you may use the winning artwork from a Teen Art Show. You may want to have a library program that teaches interior design, either with paper or electronically. Partnering with local interior designers and architects can create a mentoring situation for your teens and give you some great free advice.

2. Local Educators

Talk to the people who send teens to the library. Do the educators in your community expect the public library to provide Internet access computers, or extensive print reference materials, or multiple copies of books assigned for class reading? It might be good to let them know that you are clearing out old reference books to make room for computers with access to electronic databases. Part of your renovation plan may include weeding your collection, or you may be planning to increase materials in a specific direction. This could be accomplished by attending a teacher's meeting at the local schools, although ideally you might want your teachers to see the space. Their input would be more realistic if they understand your vision. While the answers may not direct your ultimate design, they will give you an idea of the academic needs of the teens that use your library.

3. Law Enforcement

For some libraries, physical safety may be an issue. In small communities where everyone knows everyone's grandma, the probability of violence may be small. But in urban areas with a high level of community violence, you might want to have a professional opinion about security issues. If you won't be staffing the teen area until the afterschool hours, you might want to consider closing the area, unless it's in a highly visible location. Enclosed areas or nooks are highly desirable from the teen vantage point, but then someone has to monitor those areas. You want to make sure that law abiding teens will feel comfortable in your teen space. Some parents won't allow their children to hang out in an area that has a reputation for rowdy, or even criminal, behavior.

4. Local Artists

If you've got local talent available, see if they might be interested in painting a mural on one of the walls in your teen area, or contributing some other artistic additions in exchange for the publicity. Better yet, the artists could work with the teens to add color and texture to the area. This is another area that could benefit from the competition of a contest, with teen involvement at all levels, including judging.

5. Senior Citizens

When Lancaster Public Library created a teen center, they received assistance from an unusual source – their senior citizen patrons. Retirees in the community formed a consortium that applied for funding, and got it. Many communities have former librarians and educators who would love the chance to continue their lifelong service to the community. It's also an important experience for teens to see how generations can care for each other.

6. Homework Help

If you are planning to set up times when a homework helper is available to help students on a drop-in basis, you may find many regular visitors to your teen space. Volunteers can be mined from college service organizations, retired teachers or substitute teachers, or from high school students looking for community service hours.

7. Other Teen Spaces

Depending on the size of your community, you may be able to get good ideas from other libraries that serve teens. Visit as many teen library spaces as possible, and take the time to speak with the library staff. What do they wish could be different about their teen areas? What do the teens love?

It might also be helpful to see how other teen areas, such as the lounge at local high schools or the teen area of a recreation center, are designed. Get input from staff from those agencies as well.

8. Other Community Members

Local celebrities
Sports personalities
Musicians
Dancers
Restaurants, caterers, chefs
Non-profit organizations that work with and serve teens
Local businesses

Appendix D

The Search Institute and the 40 Developmental Assets
40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents
http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18

Developmental Assets and Library Connections
Copyright 2009 Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc. *Connecting Young Adults and Librarians*,
4th ed.
http://www.search-institute.org/system/files/librarians8x14.pdf

Appendix E

ADA Standards for Accessible Design
http://www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards_index.htm
ALA's Accessibility Basics for Librarians
http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oitp/emailtutorials/accessibilitya/accessibility.cfm