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young adult library services



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INSIDE:

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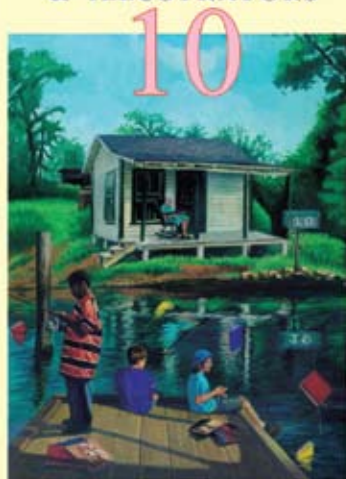
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About This Cover

Poster art for Teen Tech Week, March 8–14, 2009. TTW is a national initiative sponsored by YALSA to ensure teens are competent and ethical users of technologies, especially those offered through libraries. Let the teens in your community know that the library is the source for electronic resources such as DVDs, databases, audiobooks, electronic games, and more. To purchase the poster and other TTW materials, go to www.alastore.ala.org. Poster design by Distillery Design Studio.

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Statement of Purpose

Young Adult Library Services is the official journal of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association. YALSA primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education for librarians serving young adults, ages twelve through eighteen. It will include articles of current interest to the profession, act as a showcase for best practices, provide news from related fields, publish recent research related to YA librarianship, and will spotlight significant events of the organization and offer in-depth reviews of professional literature. YALSA will also serve as the official record of the organization.

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from the Editor

RoseMary Honnold

This winter issue of YALS features Teen Tech Week™ 2009, Press Play @ your library®, YALSA's initiative to celebrate teens and technology in libraries. School and public librarians working with teens have found technology to be a wonderful tool for making connections. While these young digital natives are eager to try any new technology, parents, teachers, and librarians keep busy trying to keep up, finding the best and safest way to use these new tools and applying them to activities that will enrich young people's lives.

Technology can be the key for your library to reach out to teens in juvenile detention centers, as the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County has found. Kelly Czarnecki tells of this amazing work being done by librarians in her article, "Dream It, Do It." Ruth Cox Clark tells us about the next new thing, cell phone novels, now hot in Japan. Vikki Terrile has great advice on making technology available to all your teens, and you'll find many great ideas for celebrating Teen Tech Week submitted by the Teen Tech Week Committee and compiled by committee member Jami Schwarzwald. Also, check out how two winners of last year's Teen Tech Week Mini Grants made the most of their awards.

This issue also features Jami Jones' second article, "Shelters from the Storm: Teens, Stress, and Libraries," focusing on the stress teens face at home and school and how we can help. Judy Michaelson explores online homework help options, and Brian W. Sturm and Karin Michel examine the power of problem novels.

Teen Tech Week reminds us that teens and technology belong in libraries. Our game-playing, multi-tasking, delightfully complex teens keep us on our toes in a constant learning curve and on the cutting edge of technology, teen literature and all its forms, and the newest trends. If lifelong learning is truly the fountain of youth, I think young adult librarians are swimming in it!

When you receive this issue, the buzz will be about the just-announced ALA Youth Media Awards. Anyone who has been to an ALA Midwinter Meeting can attest to the excitement in the ballroom as titles and authors are announced for the Printz, Edwards, Odyssey (for audiobooks), and Alex Awards. A new award to look for this year is the William C. Morris Award, for a first-time author. The Best Books, Popular Paperbacks, Quick Picks, and all the other valuable lists are released as well into the eager hands of librarians wanting to provide the best available materials for their teen audiences. All of the committees assigned to the task of selecting items for these awards and lists have read, thought, studied, argued, and carefully listened before committing to their final choices. Their work is rewarded by the agreeing cheers and hoots from the appreciative audience. The spring issue of YALS will feature all of the awards and lists to help you select the best materials for your teens. YALS

Engaging the YALSA Community

from the President

Sarah Cornish Debraski



I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the recent member survey. A total of 959 members answered a variety of questions about YALSA and membership in YALSA. This information is extremely important. The Division and Membership Promotion Committee has worked hard to review the answers, analyze the data, and make recommendations to the board on the basis of that data. When asked if they would recommend YALSA membership to a friend or colleague, almost 90 percent of the respondents said yes. ALA member survey data also shows that the majority of members pay their dues themselves. This all says to me that members truly value their membership and its benefits. And so, I'd like to issue everyone a challenge: Go out and recommend YALSA to someone! This winter, YALSA will be running a special membership promotion. Every time you recruit a new member, you are entered into a drawing to win a fabulous prize. A special membership form is online at www.ala.org/drive2009. This promotion will be running from January 23 through March 23.

By increasing our membership, we will build a stronger YA community and have a stronger voice when advocating for teens. Consider last year's I Love My Librarian campaign, in which members urged elected officials to cosponsor the Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLS) Act by getting patrons to send in hundreds of postcards proclaiming the value of their librarian. This is a great example of a large group speaking with one voice. Presently, we have a dynamic membership that drives our association with new ideas and energy. But, with 16,000 public libraries in the United States plus school libraries, and just 5,700 YALSA members, there are definitely many more people out there who can benefit from YALSA membership. The inverse is true, too—YALSA can benefit from new members.

As you read this issue, consider the wealth of ideas and information you are getting from your fellow members—ideas for Teen Tech Week™, practices to try at your own library, and information to build your own knowledge. It is true that

our members are our best resources! The member survey showed that the two biggest reasons people are in YALSA are to stay up-to-date on YA literature and media and to learn about best practices. YALSA definitely meets those needs, as do our wiki, blog, discussion lists, programs, and events.

As I write this, I'm preparing for the Young Adult Literature Symposium in Nashville. I'm excited about this event for many reasons, including the opportunity to meet many new people. About half of the symposium registrants are *not* YALSA members. I'll be making a special effort to welcome these folks and invite them to join YALSA. I encourage all of you to look for similar opportunities to let people know about YALSA membership. Remember, if they mention your name on the special membership form, you are entered into the drawing to win a prize. But really, we are all winners when we work together to grow and build our organization! **YALSA**

Find It! Shoot It! Shop It!

Connecting Teens to Technology at La Puente Library

By Monique Delatte

The name of our city, La Puente, translates to “the bridge.” The La Puente Library is very much a bridge between an exciting, growing, majority Latino community of recent immigrants and the technological resources and learning tools that today’s libraries can offer new citizens.

According to the 1999–2000 U.S. Census, this community is 83 percent Latino, and more than three-quarters of the citizens of La Puente speak a language other than English at home. The U.S. Census Bureau reports higher-than-average poverty rates and low education levels here, which are a challenge to community supports. Fully one-third of La Puente residents over the age of twenty-five have less than a ninth-grade education.¹

What do these statistics mean for the teens of La Puente? The good news is that many teens preserve their Latino cultural heritage, spending free time learning folklórico dancing for quinceañeras or helping with the preparation and cooking

for large family events. Practicing these traditional arts is important in the social development of teens. Yet the time that teens spend dancing with friends is time not spent learning about technology. Tech-savvy youths are those who will have more choices about their futures. Many of our young adult patrons and volunteers are intimidated by technology. Tasks such as downloading photographs from a digital camera can be challenging because of the novelty of the many small steps involved.

To help teens become more familiar with La Puente Library’s available technology, young adults enjoyed a series of basic classes for Teen Tech Week (TTW). To advertise the programs, I visited local middle and high schools, providing information literacy (IL) classes and flyers. There is also a core group of thirty regular participants who are Young Adult Board members.

The goal of the program was to familiarize the young adults of La Puente with basic technology skills. There were four main objectives:

- Present online searching options for attaining reliable information sources
- Familiarize teens with e-shopping for books
- Teach young adults digital photography skills
- Provide a tutorial in the setup of gaming equipment and share gaming tips

On our opening day, March 4, TTW kicked off with a digital photography class for teens. Participants received photography tips and a brief overview of the contributions of influential Latin photographers and artists. Teens then formed groups and went outside of the library to take digital pictures lit by sunlight and shaded by the natural environment. Local artist Roxana Torres guided the teens for twenty minutes, then taught them how to upload their pictures. High school junior

A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin School of Information, MONIQUE DELATTE is employed by the County of Los Angeles Public Library as a Children’s and Young Adult Services/Reference Librarian for La Puente Library. Delatte’s cultural heritage series for young adults at West Covina Library was selected for publication in *Excellence in Library Services to Young Adults* (YALSA 2008), and a recommended bibliography of clothing and textile resources for public and academic libraries that she cowrote for *Reference and User Services Quarterly* is currently in print.

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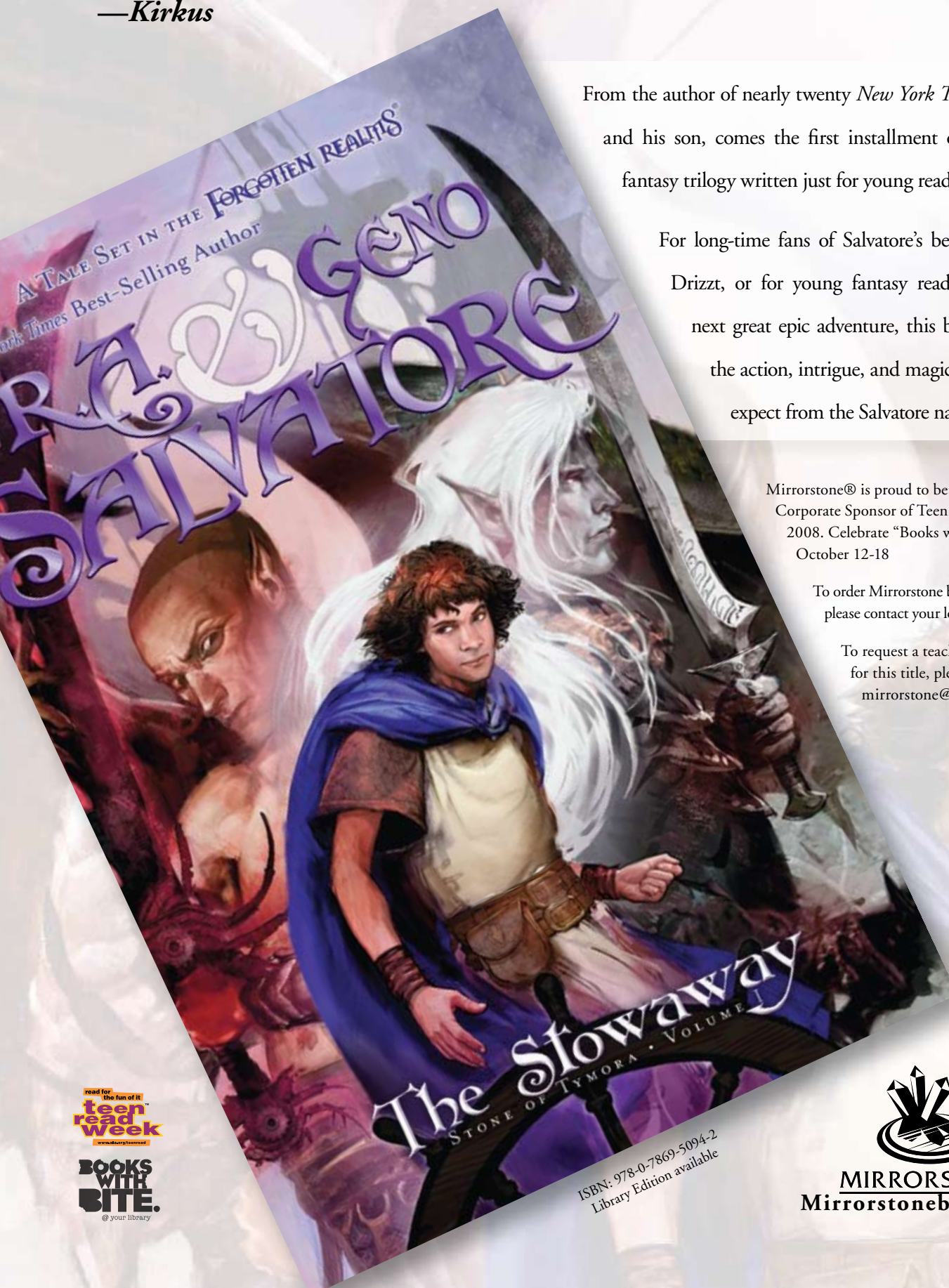
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Teens not only learned from the La Puente Library's exciting series of programs during Teen Tech Week, they also had tons of fun and won cool prizes! From front: Kayla Kim (age 16), Valerie Garcia (age 12), Stefany Godoy (age 12), John Kim (age 18), Monique Delatte (librarian), and behind Kayla's shoulder is Wendy Villalobos (age 16)

Sara Gomez said she "loved it." Preteen Guadalupe Robles agreed: "I like it here because you get to find out about cameras."

On Wednesday, the young adults assembled a digitally produced photo album of pictures from the preceding day for the YA collection. Teens worked on the album every day, adding new pictures from each event, then organized the album on Saturday. Teens also shot pictures of the families attending story time and helped the young participants create frames for their new family photos with Flip-Flap Jack, a flannel board character made of breakfast foods. This project allowed teens to practice the photography skills they learned the day before and share this knowledge with the storytime families. Joanne Mata, an eighth grader, mused, "It's pretty awesome. I got to meet new people." Pictures of Wednesday's events were featured in a front-page story

in the local paper. John Kim, a "volunteer" since 2004, told *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* reporter Claudia Palma that he "learned a lot about what websites are good for uploading and sharing pictures, and for research."

On Thursday, teens participated in an IL class, followed by an intense scavenger hunt, pizza, and online book shopping. Teens received gift bags containing cool prizes such as squishy brains, pirate-themed rubber duckies, Frisbees, and earbuds from County of Los Angeles Public Library (CoLAPL) Teen Services. Kayla Kim, a new volunteer, exclaimed, "I loved it. It was fun and exciting!"

The IL class at the library covered resources related to upcoming school reports. The IL sessions also reviewed the best use of Google and .gov websites, as well as Biography Resource Center, Infotrac, and ProQuest. After the scavenger hunt, teens

used the YALSA Teen Tech Week Mini Grant monies to learn about collection development in a hands-on manner by spending \$350 on books for the YA collection from Amazon.com. Teens selected No Fear Shakespeare titles and box sets including the Shopaholic and Gossip Girl series.

Friday was a fun technology day, as teens had the opportunity to compete in Wii gaming, *Guitar Hero*, *Dance Dance Revolution*, and a variety of popular board games. Young Adult Board volunteers often have trouble setting up the gaming equipment, so a visiting librarian and gaming aficionado joined us to teach teens setup techniques and gaming tips. The remainder of the grant funding was dedicated to Friday's gift card drawing: every day that teens attended a TTW program, they received one entry in the drawing for gift cards from EB Games, Starbucks, Bath and Body Works, Jamba Juice, and Barnes and Noble. Josie Rojas, a middle school student who received extra credit for participating, said of TTW, "It's cool. Nice games. I learned lots of stuff."

The young adults who participated in TTW activities gained familiarity with modern technological tools; discovered top resources for middle school, high school, and college-level research; and learned that the library is a place to learn about technology skills.

The Friends of the La Puente Library provided funds for pizza, snacks, and drinks, as well as board games, craft supplies, disposable digital cameras, photo paper, and a Shutterfly.com photo book and photo prints for a promotional poster displayed after the event. The CoLAPL paid for the video game equipment as well as the employee and artist time. Participants created a thank you card for the grant sponsors, Dungeons & Dragons and YALSA. **YALS**

FIND IT! SHOOT IT! SHOP IT!
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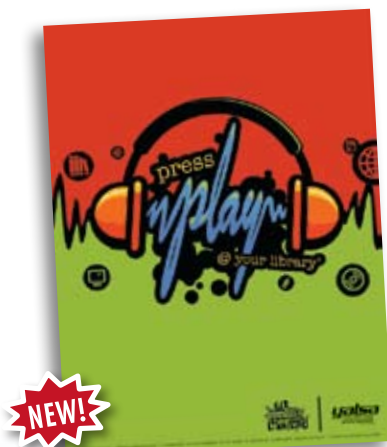
TEEN TECH WEEK™

MARCH 8-14, 2009

Teen Tech Week offers libraries a chance to showcase all of the nonprint resources they have available to the teens in their community, such as DVDs, databases, audiobooks, online homework help and videogames. Teen Tech Week is sponsored by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) and is a national initiative for librarians, parents, educators, and other concerned adults that aims to encourage teens to use libraries' nonprint resources for education and recreation. This year's theme is "Press Play." For more information, please visit www.ala.org/teentechweek.



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Grants Get Teens Gaming

Teen Tech Week™ 2008 at the Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County

By Beth Hoeffgen

At our library, we firmly believe that teens need to know how to use technology ethically and well, and that technology use is one of the most important skills we can help them to acquire. Therefore we jumped at the chance to apply for a Teen Tech Week (TTW) Mini Grant and were very fortunate to receive one. This enabled us to hold a *Super Smash Brothers Melee* video game tournament for teens in celebration of TTW. We were also able to purchase three video games for the use of our Teen Video Game Club and a gaming book collection. The games purchased were *Super Smash Brothers Brawl*, *Dance Dance Revolution*, and *Guitar Hero III*, all for the Wii. The book collection contained titles on everything from careers in the video game industry to the history of video games and video game art. We were also able to offer a \$50 Amazon gift certificate to our first place winner, a \$25 certificate for second place, and a \$10 certificate for third place.

We chose a video game tournament as our TTW event because of the large interest we have in teen video game programming. At the request of some members of our Teen Advisory Board, we held our first video game event, also a *Melee* tournament, in November 2007. At that event, we announced the formation of the Teen Video Game Club. At the first club meeting the teens decided to meet every other week at the library for gaming. The library provides an LCD projector and one television, and the teens bring game systems and games to play. Because of the Mini Grant, we have now started a library-owned game collection. We usually have fifteen to twenty teens who attend the club meetings. We

have also offered a few gaming programs at our three outlying branches and plan to do more of these in the future, as our teen patrons there are requesting them.

Our TTW tournament attracted twenty-four participants. We borrowed two Wiis and one LCD projector from Teen Advisory Board members. Pairing these with our own projector allowed us to have two tournament divisions running simultaneously in the same room. The games were projected onto walls so everyone could watch the action. Our Friends of the Library group provided three Subway sandwich platters, since our tournament began at 3 p.m. and lasted until 6:30 p.m. We also provided chips and soda. We had our new gaming book collection on display and promoted our video game club at the tournament, which has resulted in new members. Everyone had a wonderful time, as is evidenced by the results of the program evaluations we collected. All of the evaluations were positive, and the only suggestions were for more playing time and more tournaments!

Besides supporting and educating teens in this area of technology, we have noticed that our gaming programs have had other very positive effects for our teens. This programming has drawn some teens into the library who we have not seen here before. In addition, we have found that some teens have made new friendships because of these activities. I have heard many teens say to each other, "I've seen you at school but I didn't know you were a gamer." Teens who never socialized with each other are finding that they have this interest in common. These kids are now getting together regularly at the gaming club. I have also had a parent tell me that she is very grateful that we have the gaming programs

BETH HOEFFGEN is the Young Adult Librarian at the Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County, Ohio. She received her MLIS from Kent State University in 2004. She loves technology, working with teens, and young adult literature.



Some of the books in the new gaming collection.

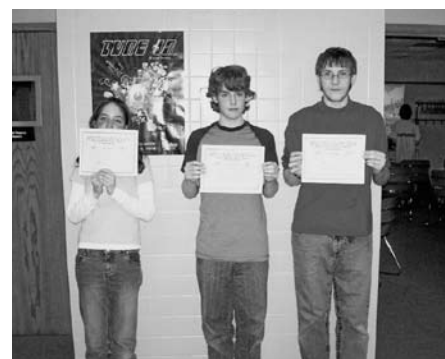
because it is the only thing that gets her son to socialize. In addition, because gaming is not always understood and supported by teachers at school, I see the positive effect that it has on these teens when they find adults respecting and encouraging their interest at the library. They always make a point of thanking me for the programs. While they all appreciate the tournaments and prizes, one teen's statement sums up how most of them feel. When asked what he liked best about our TTW tournament,



Division 1 of the *Super Smash Brothers Melee* tournament.

he replied, "the opportunity to hang out with friends and play games."

We are also trying to support and educate teens in other areas of technology. We held our first Teen Screen Film Festival in January. Teens submitted short films and were awarded prizes in four areas: best overall film, best editing, best screenplay, and best camerawork. We try to order technology-oriented books on everything from videoblogging to machinima. We had three teens conduct a How to Make a Movie for



From left to right: 2nd place winner Rachel Downey, age 12; 1st place winner Levi Fawcett, age 16; and 3rd place winner James Hoeffgen, age 16.

YouTube class for other interested teens at all four of our branches in fall 2007. Our next goal is to find funding to purchase our own Wii so we will not have to continue to borrow the system from our teens. Our thanks go to YALSA and their TTW 2008 sponsor, Dungeons & Dragons, for giving us this opportunity to connect teens with technology at the library. **YALS**

FIND IT! SHOOT IT! SHOP IT! continued from page 6

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Teen Tech Week™ Survey Results

*Kathy Mahoney and
Kelly Laszczak*

During Teen Tech Week 2008, teens nationwide were polled about their technology and library use, and the results are overwhelming—teens *are* connected! YALSA surveys posted online at SmartGirl and SurveyMonkey were used to gather the data, which included demographics, technology preferences, use of technology at public and school libraries, and awareness of Teen Tech Week events.¹ So, what exactly did we find out about the culture of today's digital natives?

Demographics

Almost half of the six-hundred-plus participants, (48.9 percent), who completed the questionnaire at SurveyMonkey were thirteen to fourteen years old at the time. A total of 42 percent were between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. SmartGirl generated roughly 550 responses from young people ranging in age from eight to twenty-two.

What Do They Do and Where?

Teens were asked to identify which online activities they participated in for personal

use, and the SurveyMonkey crowd's most selected answers were watching videos, playing games, e-mailing, and downloading music.

When asked what online activity they spent the most time doing, the top vote-getter was updating Facebook and MySpace pages.

- Almost half of the teens (47.3 percent) who responded to this

question reported that they use social networking sites on a daily basis. An additional 23 percent weighed in as weekly users, while nearly 20 percent claim to be nonusers of social networking sites.

- The most common response (50.4 percent) when asked why they don't use social networking sites was simply "not interested." Lack of availability at home, school, or the public library was cited as the primary reason by 47.8 percent. A significant number (27.4 percent) reported other reasons, which tended to be parental restrictions.

Responding to slightly different questions, teens at SmartGirl cited the most popular online activity as e-mailing friends, followed closely by research or homework tasks and downloading and listening to music. Surfing the Web, playing online games, and instant messaging also made the cut. Social networking sites trailed the pack with fewer than one-third of the respondents singling out MySpace or Facebook as online destinations.

Of those completing the Smartgirl questionnaire, a whopping 82 percent of teens reported that they use technology

KATHY MAHONEY is a Youth Services Librarian at the Brewster (Mass.) Ladies' Library (www.brewsterladieslibrary.org), where she has worked for two years specializing in Teen Services. She received an MS in library and information science from the University of Illinois–Champaign Urbana in 2006. As a member of YALSA, she has served on the Second Life Task Force and is currently on the Teen Tech Week Committee. She was recently appointed to the statewide committee responsible for revising the Standards for Public Library Services to Young Adults in Massachusetts. **KELLY LASZCZAK** is the Assistant Head of Youth Services at the Orland Park (Ill.) Public Library (www.orlandparklibrary.org/teen.htm). She works with youth and teens through age 18. Kelly is a member of YALSA's Teen Tech Week committee. She also serves on several committees for youth and teens in Illinois, including the Illinois Library Association's Young Adult Services Forum Committee.

primarily at home, 7.39 percent get connected at school, while only 3.41 percent log on most often at the library,

When it comes to playing games, apparently practice makes perfect—or at least improves your score. About 60 percent of the teens at SmartGirl said they play online or computer games every day.

How Did They Learn All This Cool Stuff?

At SurveyMonkey, teens were asked about technology workshops offered at their school or public libraries. In both instances, the majority of respondents were not sure if either venue offered technology workshops. Almost 40 percent were certain that their school libraries did not offer technology workshops, while only 13 percent could definitively say that their public library did not provide this service. However, if technology workshops were offered at their school or public library, 80 percent said they definitely would, or would possibly attend. Only 20 percent reported no interest in technology workshops.

What's In It for Them?

When asked what materials (other than books) were available for checkout at their public library, 83 percent of teens reported DVDs, followed by 79.3 percent offering audiobooks, and 64.9 percent circulating music CDs.

How's the Service?

The top vote-getter in the category of services provided for teens was online research databases, which were tagged as available in public libraries by 76.8 percent of the respondents and in school libraries by 79.4 percent.

Wireless Internet was available to 62.3

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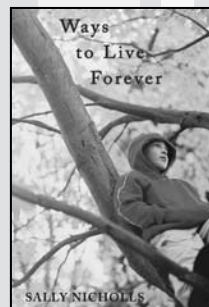
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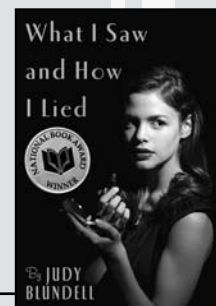
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percent of the teens at their public libraries and 40.7 percent of them at their school libraries. Color printers were available for printing material at 59.1 percent of public libraries, and 52.8 percent of school libraries.

Just more than half of the respondents (53 percent) indicated that their public library had a room or space reserved just for teens.

Needs Improvement!

School libraries lead the way in providing audiobooks for teens, with 76.9 percent reportedly offering material in this format. But all other nonbook options decreased markedly in school libraries across the boards. Thirty percent of the school libraries in this sampling offer DVDs to students and no more than 20 percent offer games, music CDs, computer software, or laptops.

When asked if they had suggestions for public libraries, more than half of the teens taking the Smartgirl test weighed in for faster computers. Slightly less than half of the group said they would be satisfied with more computers, and an equal number thought laptop checkout was the way to go.

Teen Tech Week = Not Quite Spring Break

Both surveys tried to gauge the buzz on Teen Tech Week. The first important clue: questions about Teen Tech Week were most frequently skipped.

Given the opportunity to suggest themes for upcoming Teen Tech Week celebrations, the majority of teens took a pass. There were approximately 135 unique responses, of which about thirty were actual suggestions for themes. The remainder were general suggestions for library activities such as Movie Nights, *Dance Dance Revolution* Nights, and free food.

More than half of the teens surveyed at SmartGirl simply didn't know if their school or public library celebrated Teen Tech Week.

What Does It All Mean for Us?

- Both surveys revealed that teens ages 13–18 use technology in general, and the Internet is a regular tool for communicating, gaming, and homework.
- About half the teens responding in each survey belong to and are active on social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook.
- Teens are aware of many of the technological services that school and public libraries offer, such as wireless Internet access, audiobooks, CDs, DVDs, and color printers.
- More than half of those surveyed said that they use their libraries to access online databases for research needs.
- When asked if they would attend technology workshops if they were offered at their school or public library, 80 percent said that they would.

- In addition to workshops on technology, teens expressed interest in faster computers, more computers, and laptop checkout as services they would use at their libraries.
- The questions that addressed Teen Tech Week had the lowest number of responders, which indicates that many of the teens completing these surveys were not aware of Teen Tech Week initiatives.

Obviously, the teens we serve are using technology both for research and for socializing. But even in areas where libraries are providing services through technology, teens are not as aware of these services as they could be. Marketing Teen Tech Week and existing technology programming and services should be a strong focus of librarians hoping to connect to teens through technology. Check the Teen Tech Week website at www.ala.org/teentechweek and the Teen Tech Week wiki at http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/Teen_Tech_Week for ideas on how to better market this important week. **YALS**

Note

1. The SurveyMonkey survey results are available at www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=1WUKpJOqNVAqsME_2fqMNgAUSx99AISXfYxj5diRss0Sw_3d. The SmartGirl survey results are available at www.smartgirl.org/reports/7824118.html.

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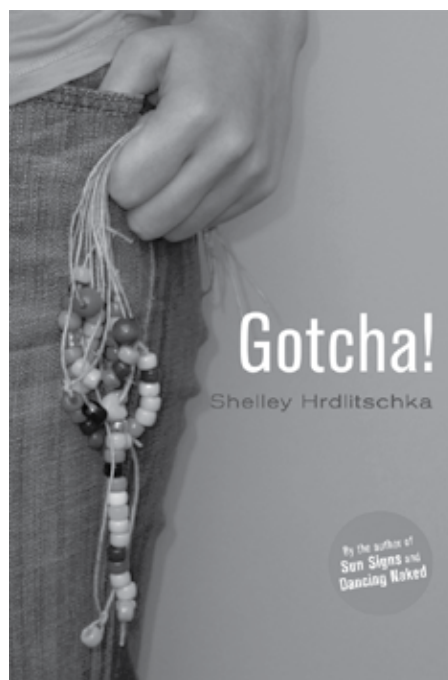
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YA Q&A

Expert Advice on Tough Teen Services Questions

The question to our experts in this issue is a concern that most librarians working with teens will face some time in their careers.

Q: How involved do you get in the lives of your teens? Should there be guidelines or policies with clear lines to follow? Any experiences to share?

A: Without question, this is the hardest part of working with teens. I've been confided in about everything from sexuality issues to substance abuse, dating abuse, school issues, racial differences, and more. I believe that connecting with teens through successful programs and services means getting to know them well. It would be impossible to run teen programs without their input, and through talking to them, even sometimes in brief conversations, you can get a glimpse of situations where you can likely help. That of course means getting to know their issues. Like any patron who comes in to the library to ask for help on a particular topic, I want to connect teens with issues to resources. I am lucky to live in a community with lots of teen counseling centers, teen drop-in sites, and many resources. I have folks I can call at the township counseling center for help and ideas when, for example, a teen is

contemplating suicide. I have contacts at the police department for "hypothetical situations" and I, in turn, help them with teens fulfilling community-service sentences. Each situation, while heartbreaking and stressful, teaches me more about how I can help teens.

It would be hard to draw guidelines when you don't always know what situations you will be approached with next. I think there are some common-sense lines. While it is appropriate for me to sort through my son's old baby clothes to help one of my teen boys who is having a new baby boy with his girlfriend and give him some at the library, it is not appropriate for me to give him my cell phone number. I don't let teens link to me on my personal Facebook or social networking sites, and when they try, I direct them to the library Facebook site. I don't ever drive a teen in my car by himself or herself. If we need to go somewhere, we use the library van or travel with another staff member. I don't like to talk to teens in my office with the door closed. That in no way deters confidences. They still talk to me at all times and even out at the desk about what is going on with them. There are definitely plenty of times when I wish I hadn't heard some things, but if this is the only time they reach out, I don't want to drop them. I and that particular teen cannot afford to miss those opportunities.

The Writing Club has become a bit challenging because teens graphically describe some troubling situations. Everyone

knows that drama is popular in teen literature, but you have to wonder when the fifteen-year-old in front of you describes how "their character" wants to commit suicide, down to the method, date, and time. I implemented a rule that any suicide stories will require me to call home. Even with that rule, some still did read stories like that, so I had to believe that was a cry for help, and of course I called their homes.

Writing contests also bring unique forms of confidences. One really excellent winner of a poetry contest wrote at length in iambic pentameter about how her principal was unsupportive of gay teens and let other teens bully them. While this may have been true, her parents and I decided to publish her winning poem anonymously for her own safety at that same school. Freedom of speech is comforting only to the point where I realized I could not have borne the information that she was beat up or intimidated because of her poem for a library contest.

Originally I went to school and interned to become a probation officer for juveniles, and realized that I would not long be happy with a career with so many impossible situations. When I started encountering similar situations as a librarian, I saw the irony and began looking up the resources. I don't always make the right choice, I'm sure, but I continue to try.
—Amy Alessio, Teen Coordinator, Schaumburg (Ill.) Township District Library

A: This can be a tricky situation for many teen librarians. Teens by nature can be quite confessional, and there are definitely many bonding opportunities for a YA librarian and a regular patron. Developing relationships with teens is one of the most satisfying parts of being a YA librarian. As a general rule for myself, I was always friendly with teens, but still made it clear that I am an adult. I would ask questions about school and teachers, follow-ups to homework assignments, talk about TV (when you watch a lot of teen shows it's great to be able to go to work and have

other people to talk to about it!) and, of course, talk a lot about books. One of the great things about working with teens is that you can have a real discussion about a book and your responses to it. It's a good way to talk about many things. Beyond that, though, I would advise treading with caution. I want to be a good role model for kids as a responsible adult, but it is not my place to take the place of their parents.

—Sarah Debraski, President, YALSA

A: Working in public libraries for many years, I have witnessed how positive interaction on a daily basis makes teens more comfortable and trusting with library staff, the library, and the learning environment. Having helped hundreds of teens find

what they needed at the library, I am aware of the fine line that we balance every day. When we don't get involved, and don't care how our interaction affects our teen customers, we run the risk of our teens not feeling we are there for them and not feeling wanted. On the other hand, we can run the risk of getting so involved that their problems and situations become our responsibilities. These situations must be avoided.

Should there be guidelines or policies especially for staff dealing with teens? I don't think so. Some organizations have general policies to guide us in our interaction with the public. What staff does need to remember with teens, and other customers, is to remain professional librarians.

Teens need to see us as professionals, not friends, and that responsibility is ours to make clear and maintain. We cannot solve their problems, nor think that we can or should, but we can provide a valuable service of referring teens to people and resources that can.

I remember a teen asking me for the state with the lowest age to get married without parental consent. Was it my responsibility to inform this teen that he and his girlfriend were too young to get married? I say no. What was my responsibility was to answer honestly with no judgments. Sometimes it can be frustrating, but rarely wrong.—Nick Buron, Assistant Director, Community Library Services, Queens Library, Jamaica, New York

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"Shelters from the Storm"

Teens, Stress, and Libraries

Jami L. Jones

Dear Dr. Jami,

I am feeling soooo stressed out. My brother is getting married next week and I am in the wedding. I have heard that weddings are supposed to be happy times, but it isn't turning out that way for me. I don't like the dress I have to wear because it makes me look so fat. I am breaking out because I am so nervous. I wish there wasn't a wedding at all. School is horrible. My parents are fighting all the time. I don't know what to do and where to turn to, but I feel really bad.

Please write back.

Miranda

Dear Miranda,

When you are having one of these times in life when everything seems not to be working out, it helps to remember that you are in control. Take a deep breath and let's learn what you can do to beat your stress . . .

Miranda, a ninth-grader, e-mailed me at my resiliency website (www.askdrjami.org) over the course of

several weeks about her stress-filled life. I am glad to report that she made it through the wedding, although she never came to like the bridesmaid dress she was forced to wear. In the short time we communicated, she learned about stress, its causes and symptoms, and how it can be managed.

JAMI L. JONES is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Library Science and Instructional Technology at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Dr. Jones is the creator of the Florida Association of Media in Education's Amanda Award, which recognizes media specialists who develop programs that promote teen resiliency and self-esteem. She is the author of *Bouncing Back: Dealing with the Stuff Life Throws at You* (Franklin Watts, 2007) and *Helping Teens Cope: Resources for School Library Media Specialists and Other Youth Workers* (Linworth, 2003). Dr. Jones received a BA in Sociology from Mills College, an MLS from the University of Maryland, and a PhD in Information Science from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The author can be contacted at jonesj@ecu.edu or her website (www.askdrjami.org).

What is Stress?

Stress is your body's normal physical and emotional response to life events and situations. Whether the events or situations are positive or negative, happy or sad, stress becomes dangerous when it builds to the point of overwhelming and that "if I add one more thing to my life, I am going to go crazy" feeling each one of us has felt at one time or another. Other indicators of stress are increased heart rate, rapid breathing, stammering, aches and pains, diarrhea, sweating, and sleeplessness. Stress can be thought of as the "perfect storm," a coming together of several events that pushes us to an overwhelmed state.

Teens are especially vulnerable to stress because at this developmental stage in life many situations are new and especially challenging to them. According to Focus Adolescent Services, a comprehensive website containing information and resources on teen and family issues, there are two important things to know about teens dealing with stress:

Stressin' Out

Alexie, Sherman. *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Little, Brown, 2007; ISBN: 978-0316013680; 230p; \$16.99.

Arnold Spirit is a smart fourteen-year-old Spokane Indian from Wellpinit, Washington. Constantly teased and bullied at the Indian school, on the suggestion of the guidance counselor he transfers to a white school in Reardon. There he makes friends and starts dating Penelope, all the while hiding his state of poverty at his home on the reservation. Arnold creates a life for himself with one foot in both the Indian world and the white world. "It was like being Indian was my job, but it was only a part-time job and it didn't pay well at all.

His determination to improve his life, a quirky sense of humor, and artistic expression keeps Arnold going through family tragedy and daily struggles in the face of handicap and life circumstances.

Bauer, Joan. *Best Foot Forward*. Putnam, 2005; ISBN: 978-0399234743; 183p; \$16.95.

Best Foot Forward, sequel to *Rules of the Road* (Putnam, 1998) finds Jenna Boller working at Gladstone Shoes. She has made progress in learning how to deal with her dysfunctional family. She enjoys her job and adores her boss, Mrs. Gladstone. When Mrs. Gladstone hires handsome Tanner Cobb, she appoints Jenna as his trainer/mentor in learning the shoe business, but Jenna isn't sure he is trustworthy. Soon however, the shoe business is on the verge of collapse and Jenna must decide who to trust and where to turn for help to keep Gladstone Shoes from ruin.

Cassidy, Anne. *Looking for JJ*. Harcourt, 2007; ISBN: 9780152061906; 219p; \$17.00.

At the age of ten, Jennifer Jones was

convicted of killing her best friend. The story begins when Alice Tully (Jennifer's new name) turns seventeen and she has been released from prison and placed in the custody of Rosie, a loving, kind social worker who works long hours. Alice also has a boyfriend, Frankie, and aside from her past, appears to have a normal teenager's life. But the press has discovered that Jennifer Jones was released from prison and is determined to track her down to publish an exclusive story. As the journalists close in on her privacy, Alice must deal with the looming threat of her new identity and location being exposed as well as the part her mother played in her past and present circumstances.

Larson, Kirby. *Hattie Big Sky*. Delacorte, 2006; ISBN: 9780385733137; 289p; \$15.95.

Sixteen-year-old Hattie Brooks has been shuffled from relative to relative since her parent's death. In a bold move she decides to take control of her life and move to Vida, Montana, to prove up on her deceased uncle's homestead claim all on her own. Hattie must deal with daily struggles against nature; Traft Martin, who is scheming to buy her out; and the unexpected prejudice of some neighbors against her friends who are not American born. In the span of one year Hattie comes to understand that survival involves determination and strength of will and the true meaning of family is the love and support of friends and neighbors.

Mackler, Carolyn. *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*. Candlewick, 2003; ISBN: 9780763619589; 246p; \$15.99.

Protagonist Virginia Shreves is a sophomore who lives in Manhattan. On

the surface it appears that she is fortunate because she is enrolled in a private school and has recently delved into the art of kissing with Froggy Welsh. But Virginia's day-to-day reality includes dealing with her mother's not-so-subtle opinion regarding Virginia's weight. If that isn't enough, her always-popular older brother, Byron, is suspended from Columbia after being charged with date rape. Virginia must juggle with feelings about her own body image while digesting the knowledge that her family may not be the perfect people they appear to be on the surface.

Vizzini, Ned. *It's Kind of a Funny Story*. Miramax, 2006; ISBN: 9780786851966; 444p; \$16.95.

As fifteen-year-old Craig Gilner is accepted by a prestigious high school in Manhattan, what he considered normal academic pressure suddenly escalates into an all-out battle with depression. Attempting to find comfort in partying, Craig tries to hold on to the moments when his mind and body seem to align, but fails. With the support of his parents, Craig is given a prescription medication and he feels improved, but not better. Reaching a point where he feels he can't continue on his own, he calls a suicide hotline and checks himself into a hospital where he receives the help he needs. While there he meets and gets to know and identify with a zany array of people, and meets a girl who helps him to solidify his sense of self, all during a five-day hospital stay.

Linda Uhler is Manager of Youth Services, Westerville (Ohio) Public Library. Linda is currently serving as Administrative Assistant on YALSA's Best Books for Young Adults Committee.

- A pile-up of many stressful life events in a small amount of time is more difficult for teens than dealing with just one event.
- If a major event causes stress, it is often because it sets off a chain of events that intensifies the ongoing, day-to-day stressful conditions of their lives.¹

A study of 4,300 high school students in Minnesota found that teen stress centered on home and school issues that often dealt with conflict and loss. In a more informal survey of sixty teens, Walker found that the primary sources of tension and trouble for teens are pressure at school from teachers, coaches, grades, and homework; relationships with friends and family; the pressure and expectations from self and others; financial pressures; and tragedy in the lives of family and friends.²

One of the greatest stressors for teens is school and academics. Teens are moving from a relatively sheltered elementary school experience to the larger and more impersonal middle school and high school. Rather than getting used to a handful of teachers in elementary school, teens in upper grades must learn the teaching styles, personalities, and expectations of many teachers. Teens who have not been prepared for the academic rigors of middle school and high school are apt to flounder and become overwhelmed by the increased difficulty and quantity of work. Left unchecked, these academic stressors can lead to dropping out, which has a tremendously negative effect on both the teen and society.³ The emphasis on career goals and end-of-grade testing places additional stress on teens.

A second cause of stress in teens is relationships. Even though a child in elementary school may fit in well with their peers, the secondary school venue is an entirely different ballgame that requires a new kind of intelligence—a more complex

set of social skills—that may not have been modeled, taught, or learned by the teen. The socially intelligent teen “can get along with others, has the ability to monitor his or her own behavior, is able to stay calm when upset or angry, and knows how to successfully solve conflicts.”⁴ The socially intelligent teen is less likely to become overstressed in the first place, but when he or she does is more likely to manage the situation. The physical and hormonal changes occurring during the teenage years can lead to feelings of low self-esteem and self-awareness, which might also negatively affect relationships.

Bullying, which is the most prevalent form of aggressive behavior in youth, includes kicking and hitting, taunting and teasing, spreading rumors and telling lies, taking or stealing from others, forcing or pressuring someone to do something he or she does not want to do, and sexual harassment.⁵ Some teens who cannot get along with others may resort to bullying to exert power and gain attention. Teens who are emotionally intelligent and socially skilled are less apt to be perpetrators or recipients of bullying.

It is Not the Same for All Teens

Not all teens respond to stress in the same manner. Heredity and life circumstances predispose some teens to fall victim to overstress—a more serious form of stress. Teens most vulnerable to stress have family histories that contain depression, suicide, alcoholism and drug use, sexual or physical abuse, eating disorders, schizophrenia, death or serious loss in the family, learning disabilities, absent or divorced parents, inadequate bonding in adoptive families, and family conflict. Personality traits that predispose teens to stress are impulsive behaviors, obsessions, aggressive and antisocial behavior, withdrawal and isolation, poor

social skills, overachieving and extreme pressure to perform, and problems eating and sleeping. Sometimes psychological and social events contribute to the accumulation of stressors. These might include a loss of an important person by death or suicide, a broken romance, a move, or unmet personal or parental expectation such as a failure to achieve a goal, poor grades, and social rejection.⁶

Stress often occurs when teens are not able to prioritize and manage their life. When Cathy Small, an anthropology professor at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, became baffled by the “alien” behaviors of first-year students at her university, she did what anthropologists are trained to do—live with the culture you want to understand. Small took a yearlong sabbatical and enrolled at her university as a freshman. She lived in the dorm, took courses, and participated in activities required of first-year students. She learned that many students are overly busy with paid jobs, school assignments, relationships, volunteering, and extracurricular activities, which leaves them little time and accounts for why many did not complete readings for class, skipped homework assignments, ate and slept in class, and balked at taking on additional responsibilities and activities.⁷ If left unmanaged, this busyness piles up and leads to stress. According to Stressfocus.com, “Stress symptoms are not to be feared, but they do signal that you are not managing your life effectively. They indicate that changes need to be made sooner or later, or more nervous consequences may follow.”⁸

The biological cause of stress is the malfunction of chemicals called neurotransmitters that communicate information between brain cells. Some neurotransmitters such as serotonin, noradrenalin, and dopamine are happy messengers that cause feelings of well-being within an individual; however, too much stress can cause these feel-good neurotransmitters to fail.

The happy messenger serotonin is responsible for restful sleep, noradrenalin makes one feel energized, and dopamine operates the body's pleasure center. In stressful situations serotonin is often the first neurotransmitter to malfunction, which causes a lack of restful sleep characterized by tossing and turning. This is followed by a failure of noradrenalin, which causes overstressed people to feel as though they do not have the energy to accomplish much of anything, and dopamine that causes teens to experience a loss of pleasure.⁹

It is estimated that 10 percent of our population has inherited a condition of low stress tolerance. Managing stressful situations is essential during adolescence because it is during these years that low stress tolerance exhibits itself. Teens who happen to be among the 10 percent predisposed to stress but have not learned how to manage their day-to-day commitments may face a lifetime struggle that can lead to depression, a serious emotional and mental disorder that is life-threatening. Whether a teen becomes depressed may depend on how they manage stress.¹⁰

Ways to Manage Stress

When neurotransmitters aren't working properly, teens might turn to sugar, caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco to rev up themselves to feel better. Teens might also try pumping up their own adrenaline by overworking and participating in thrill-seeking hobbies. But these quick fixes have drawbacks—sugar highs lead to sugar lows and thrill seeking can be dangerous. Prescription drugs may not help either. There are better, more natural ways to manage stress: "Stress can be tackled by combining these two principles. One should either learn to live with the stressor or learn to suppress or change it."¹¹

When teens are overstressed, the following lifestyle changes are recommended:

- Reset your body clock by sticking to particular sleeping hours.
- Give your body a chance to rest
- Say "no" more often so you do not become overcommitted.
- Take time off to relax and enjoy yourself.
- Eat a stress-relieving diet that includes less sugar, more vegetables, and take multi-vitamin and mineral supplements.
- Exercise.¹²

The Library as Stress-Buster

Although some teens are able to deal with stress in healthy ways through relaxation, problem-solving, and organization, others are not. As caring adults who work with teens, librarians are in a position to help young patrons manage stress by creating an environment that, in the lyrics of Bob Dylan, is "shelter from the storm." Each of the stress-reducing techniques identified in this article can be taught or caught through mentoring and role modeling and by creating programs that focus on the development of personal and social skills.

In 1999, the Wallace Foundation launched the Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development (PLPYD) Initiative to "support the development of innovative models for public library systems to provide high quality educational enrichment and career development programs for underserved low-income teenagers and children."¹³ The nine public libraries selected for participation in the initiative were challenged to develop or expand youth programs that engaged individual teens in a developmentally supportive manner while enhancing library services for all youth in the community. The initiative was evaluated by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago in 2004. The report is available online at

More Stress Tips for Teens

- Breathe deeply.
- Practice muscle relaxation.
- Set small goals.
- Live a healthy life.
- Rehearse and practice feared situations.
- Talk your problems over with others.
- Lower unrealistic expectations.
- Schedule breaks and time for fun.
- Be kind to yourself. Accept yourself and know you have unique strengths.

—Teenshealth, "Stress," kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html.

www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1380. As libraries focused on youth development, attitudes among staff and librarians towards teens improved and the library became more visible in the community.¹⁴ It was found that caring librarians make all the difference.

The disposition of caring is essential to all librarians, but especially for those whose job description includes the words *teen*, *adolescent*, or *youth*. If our aim is to encourage teens to actively participate in the library, we must create the type of environment they need and want—and that begins with us! Diane Tuccillo, a public librarian, who is author of *Library Teen Advisory Groups: A VOYA Guide* (Scarecrow, 2005) and is presently writing a book on youth participation in libraries, remembers the

many teens I have seen through the years turn to the library as a place for stress relief, and a whole lot more. I remember the young man who avoided gang recruitment by coming to the library to laugh, participate, and have a place to be where he wasn't hassled by

gang members. . . . I remember the teen who would “stock up” on the program snacks—and we would let him—knowing there was little for him to eat at home. I remember the homeschooled fifteen-year-old boy whose involvement on the teen library advisory board was one of the few times he could interact with kids his own age. I could go on and on, but I have seen (and am currently seeing) so many teens transformed by us ‘being there’ for them in the library, why, it would take a whole additional book to describe it all!¹⁵ **YALS**

Resources to Help Overstressed Teens

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Recruit a new YALSA member & win a Flip Video camera!

Encourage a friend or colleague to join YALSA between January 23 and March 23, and both of you will be entered into a drawing for a Flip Ultra camera! You'll be entered each time you refer someone to YALSA during this 2009 membership drive. For the purpose of the contest, the new member must not have previously been a YALSA member, but they may already be an ALA member.

How to Enter

Starting January 23, tell a friend or colleague how much you love being a member of YALSA. Download the special membership form at www.ala.org/drive2009 and enter your name where it says "Person who recruited you." Pass it on to your coworkers, colleagues and friends.

All membership forms for the contest need to be received at the YALSA office by March 23, 2009. Those paying by check may mail the form to: YALSA Member Drive, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. If paying by credit card, they may be faxed to (312) 280-5276.

After March 23, one membership form will be randomly drawn from the entries received. The new member and the recruiter will each win a Flip Video Ultra camera. Two runners-up will receive a box of books from YALSA.

Winners will be notified and announced on the YALSA web site.

Reach out and encourage a colleague, friend or family member to join YALSA today!

Questions? Contact us at 1-800-545-2433, ext. 4390 or at yalsa@ala.org.



Dream It Do It: At the Library!

Technology Outreach at a Juvenile Detention Center

Kelly Czarnecki

Imagine being in the library amidst conversation where youth are eagerly tossing ideas back and forth about ways to improve their communities. “I want to get people to volunteer and help clean up.” “I would like to make a music club to help teens explore their talent.” “I want to have a plan for making bag lunches and deliver them in downtown Charlotte to help the homeless.” Wow! What enthusiasm and interest in making a positive contribution to their neighborhoods!

It is often said that those from the Millennial Generation (born between 1980 and 2000) have a high rate of volunteerism. According to the article “Managing Millennials” by Claire Raines, the message of “serve your community” has a profound effect on these youth and that 50 percent reported volunteering in their community.¹

Five incarcerated males, ages 16–17, located in the United States, currently have the opportunity to put this characteristic of their generation to use through a program called the Dream It Do It

Initiative (DIDI). The partner organizations involved in this program include Global Kids, Ashoka’s Youth Venture, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and a jail facility.

What Are the Goals of DIDI?

The goal of DIDI is to have groups of youth (ages 13–17) develop and launch their venture. A group can be made up of two people minimally. A venture, as defined by Youth Venture (www.genv.net) whose subheading is “Building a Global Movement of Young Changemakers” includes the following tenets:

1. The project must be a new club or organization. In other words, even though there are plenty of organizations in communities that are already doing great work, the youth are required to be truly entrepreneurial and develop their own goals and how they want to achieve them.
2. The project must be youth driven. While the youth can work with adult allies that can help guide them, the adults helping with the project are not making the decisions for the youth.
3. The project is sustainable. It is not meant to be a one-time workshop or event, but something that will be ongoing and able to grow with up to \$1000 in seed money provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation per group.
4. The venture benefits the community in some way.²

Who Are the Partners?

Exploring the fourth tenet a bit further will help the reader understand who the organizations involved in DIDI are and why they are involved in the first place. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Health and Healthcare Improvement (www.rwjf.org) is involved in this project and funding it from a healthcare angle. The ventures must improve the health of the community. While some people might automatically think that means the absence of disease, it encompasses a much broader definition. According to the World Health Organization, “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”³ So

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far, the guys involved in the project totally get this. In some ways, perhaps more vividly than others who might not be exposed to the same social conditions that they are in their neighborhoods, schools, or the jail itself. For example, in discussing the issues in their neighborhood, they not only identify drugs as a problem but the drug dealer. Several of the teens share the same interest of not wanting younger kids to make the same decisions they did to end up in jail and thus relate their venture ideas around providing more productive activities for the youth to be involved in. A project called the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention (<http://tinyurl.com/3gbkl2>) spearheaded by physician-epidemiologist Gary Slutkin and funded in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, took the approach that violence is a public health issue and worked to develop community-based task forces, particularly including those who were ex-offenders themselves. An initiative of the program called CeaseFire (www.ceasefirechicago.org) has also used Second Life as a medium to learn anger management issues.

Ashoka's Youth Venture is an organization with locations throughout the United States. They have been involved in supporting youth to address social needs for fourteen years by providing tools and support to help make their dreams a reality. Global Kids (www.globalkids.org) is an organization based in New York City that works with urban youth to help make them successful students and global leaders. Their online component of youth leadership involves youth blogging, initiating and discussing current-events topics, and participating in the virtual world of Teen Second Life (<http://teen.secondlife.com>) among other virtual worlds, where youth have raised awareness on many global issues including sex trafficking, AIDS, the Holocaust, and social networking, and have worked with youth from all over the world to do so.

How Does the Library Fit In?

Chances are, while your library might not be a direct partner of any one of these organizations, you and your teens are probably engaged in similar work. Many public libraries look to the Minnesota-based Search Institute (www.search-institute.org), which has a list of forty developmental assets that can help youth grow into healthy and caring adults and can often provide justification of many youth programs in libraries in the first place. Assets DIDI particularly address include:

- Other Adult Relationships: Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults
- Youth as Resources: Young people are given useful roles in the community
- Positive Peer Influence: Young person's best friends model responsible behavior
- Constructive Use of Time (Youth Programs): Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in community organizations
- Commitment to Learning: Young person is motivated to do well (in school)
- Caring: Young person places high value in helping others
- Planning and Decision Making: Young person knows how to plan

ahead and make choices

- Positive View of Personal Future: Young person is optimistic about his or her personal future⁴

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County has been involved in outreach services with the jail facility for several years. I started in 2006 with an existing book club for youth. I met with the



Partners and youth meet to go over the guidelines of the workshops: participation, one mic, and safe space.



Youth and partners gather in the DIDI coffeehouse to begin the workshop.



Youth give a mock presentation to the partners on stage at the DIDI coffeehouse.

youth in the library every other week, and we discussed a variety of books including *The Coldest Winter Ever* by Sistah Souljah and *Stuck in Neutral* by Terry Trueman. I began to get more interested in connecting to the youth through technology, as that is what we were doing at my library. When one of the guys in the group suggested making a movie of a puppet show they could show their children (some of the incarcerated youth are fathers), I was able to bring the camera to the facility to film the skits the guys created.

I have used technology with the youth in other ways, including blogging about their experiences and what they're reading, participating in Teen Tech Week™ programs such as "finger DDR" (download at www.stepmania.com), and if they are going home soon and want to sign up online for a public library card, I have assisted them in doing so. Using technology is a twenty-first-century social skill that can help youth become productive members in society. If youth aren't able to engage in these skills, "they will find themselves left behind in school and in the workplace," according to Henry Jenkins in his paper, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century."⁵ While it's true that many facilities won't allow online access for obvious reasons, it's fortunate that those in charge of this facility feel that access is important and that the positives of engaging in this way outweigh the potential dangers of allowing online access.

The Changemakers

The group of five, also self-referred to as the "Icebergs" (because they are so cool), meet weekly in the jail library with Global Kids and Youth Venture online in the virtual world of Teen Second Life. The island, or the space in which they meet, is closed down to others, which is frequently done

with many workshops, but particularly with this one to ensure that the only interaction occurring with the group is with the staff involved in the project. The young men are represented by an avatar, a digital representation of themselves. They each use a laptop and communicate through text chat. Workshops are designed to help the teens develop and plan their venture. They discuss an action plan and what they can do now while they are in jail to contribute toward their venture (such as create flyers or write a song to raise awareness about their project), what roles each young man in the group would like to take on, how to allocate their seed money budget, and how to present their ideas in front of a panel.

Much of their interaction takes place offline and in person as well as online, but not just on the island. They are given journals to keep track of their ideas throughout the week in addition to the blog posts they write (available at www.holymeatballs.org/second_life/didi_initiative). They often cite communication through text chat and blogging as important skills they are learning. Developing their thoughts through instant messaging, posting photos of their avatar, and even podcasting (which will be posted soon on ReZed, a virtual worlds community hub at www.rezed.org) are all part of DIDI. As one teen, known as Icey in Teen Second Life, writes,

Getting up out of bed to attend these online meetings with second life, and teen second life was always a great pain, but I can tell you from my own mouth, it was worth it. This program is a really great way to keep a positive mind and if you're on that path, then I think you [should] really try it!!!!

Since the young men are still in the developmental stages of their ventures, we don't have any final outcomes to report.

How Can Libraries Get Involved in a Similar Project?

Perhaps starting out with access to Teen Second Life won't fly with your organization, but introducing technology in small ways to a jail facility where your library is already doing outreach would be a natural way to start. If you're able to bring in such tools as a digital camera, let the librarian keep it until he or she is comfortable that all pictures have been cleared out. If you're able to bring in gaming consoles and peripherals, take photos beforehand so the librarian can look at exactly what it is you're bringing and identify any possible materials that you might not be allowed to introduce to the facility. If allowing the youth to access a blog isn't possible, perhaps distributing journals where they can write what they want to post would be a compromise. If you sense there is a possibility the door might be open to allowing the teens to use technology, use the following resources to help develop a proposal explaining how teens' access to technology can help keep them on track with learning in the twenty-first century. **YALS**

Resources

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DREAM IT DO IT
continued on page 31

Not so long ago, the only option for providing homework help through the public library was organizing homework centers and using library staff, volunteers, or paid tutors. Students had to come to the library, and in many cases needed to schedule an appointment in advance. The ability to access the service depended on geographic proximity to the library, transportation, hours of operation, and availability of a qualified tutor. With these limitations, many students could not take advantage of this library service.

With the advent of the Internet, libraries began to offer homework help through pathfinders on their websites. Although students could find useful information by following the links to highlighted websites, the information was static and there was no way to evaluate students' success in finding what they needed.

Throughout the past several years, a new model has been adopted by public libraries to complement the earlier models of homework centers and pathfinders—online tutoring services. By subscribing to an online tutoring service, libraries provide students with access to tutors through the Web. This new model allows libraries to extend tutoring services to more students during more hours.

According to a new ALA study, online homework help is thriving in public libraries. "Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study 2007–2008" reports that public libraries are using technology at record rates to help children succeed in school. More than 83 percent of public libraries offer online homework resources, including live tutors—up 15 percent in one year.¹ From these findings, it would seem that it's no longer a question of whether to offer online homework help but rather one of when and how.

Online homework help (also called online tutoring) leverages technology to provide the attention and support of a live

Online Homework Help

Evaluating the Options

Judy Michaelson

tutor skilled in the subject area where the student needs help. For the 73 percent of students who already turn to their computers at homework time, it is a natural fit and a welcome resource.

The greatest benefit for students is the on-demand nature of online homework help. Students can use their online tutoring time for help with an assignment or to build skills, study for a test, or brainstorm ideas for a science project.

tutoring or online homework help are

- the connection with a live tutor over the Internet;
- the ability to not need an appointment;
- the access to help on-demand in core subjects;
- the availability of services outside of school and library hours; and
- the access to services through computers in the library or at home.

How Online Tutoring Works in the Library Environment

Online tutoring services have been available through public libraries since 2000. The fundamental features of online

Access to a tutor begins through the library's website, whether the student is in the library or at home. Some services are completely Web-based while others require a software download. Students click on a link, authenticate with a library card number, and provide their grade level and the subject in

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which they need help. They are then connected to a tutor who has been screened and certified by the tutoring service. Tutors and students engage in online chat; some services also permit voice communication.

Students and tutors share a whiteboard on which both can draw and write. On some services websites can be shared and files can be uploaded and downloaded within the online classroom environment. Depending on the service you choose, more than one whiteboard might be available simultaneously and writing assistance might be on-demand in a secure tutoring classroom. Other services check writing assignments and provide assistance offline in several hours or the next day, sending an alert to the student's e-mail when his or her writing assignment has been reviewed by a tutor.

Factors to Consider When Selecting an Online Tutoring Service

Public libraries that have implemented online tutoring services find them to be an excellent tool for expanding service to teens and families. Online tutoring meets the needs of a hard-to-reach market segment and engenders high visibility and good will in communities.

Several companies now offer online tutoring programs for libraries. According to librarians who have evaluated various services, the five areas they generally highlight as most important to consider are

- tutor quality;
- safety and the student experience;
- customer support;
- price; and
- reporting.

Tutor Quality

Online tutoring is not the same as teaching.

Students come to an online tutoring site with a specific need at a specific time—they have a homework problem they need help with or a test the next day to study for. Online tutors need to be trained to work effectively in the online environment. This means not only knowing their subject area, but having a good understanding of how to efficiently help students solve their specific problems and advance their learning.

Using online tools takes training. As you evaluate online tutoring services, be sure to ask specific questions about both initial training and ongoing mentoring.

Some points to consider regarding tutors include

- the tutor certification process and background check;
- the ongoing training and mentoring process;
- the percent of tutors based in North America;
- the tutor support network;
- the professional growth ladder to retain experienced tutors;
- the tutor evaluation process; and
- the tutor's workflow (e.g., does the tutor help multiple students at one time).

Safety and the Student Experience

The goal in offering online tutoring is to provide a safe, positive learning experience for students. Online tutoring services approach the student experience differently, so it's important to assess the differences and determine which approach you are most comfortable with.

Some services cite a total number of tutors under contract, but it is possible that not all of them are serving public library clients. Because online tutoring services also offer their programs direct to consumers, some tutors may be reserved solely for

private customers.

The essence of online tutoring is the one-to-one interaction. However, one-to-one doesn't always mean just one session at a time for the tutor. In some cases, a service might permit tutors to conduct several sessions simultaneously, toggling back and forth among them. Although allowing tutors to sign on to more than one session at a time might reduce initial wait time for the student, it can mean a student is kept waiting while the tutor is engaged in an additional session, slowing down the flow of the student-tutor interaction and possibly affecting the quality of the learning experience. Your library needs to evaluate which workflow is better for your students—waiting up front and then having undivided attention from the tutor or being admitted to the classroom without waiting but having a slower session while the tutor serves multiple students simultaneously.

Libraries implementing live, online services want to be assured that students are operating in a safe and secure environment and that all interactions between tutors and students are in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Some services collect student e-mail addresses to return homework comments a day or so later. Some allow voice communication between students and tutors. Your library needs to decide how comfortable you are with less than total anonymity for students.

Some points to consider regarding safety and the student experience include

- the total number of tutors and percent who work with public library clients;
- the number of one-to-one sessions a single tutor can conduct simultaneously;
- the method of file sharing and whether e-mail addresses are required;
- the services provided during the live tutoring session versus those that require the student to wait for input;

- the ability to review transcripts of all sessions for appropriate conduct, whether written or oral;
- the ability to print whiteboard content, URLs of all websites shared, as well as the chat session; and
- the feedback mechanism to evaluate student satisfaction, including student comments.

Customer Support

Libraries considering online tutoring services will want to look at several aspects of customer service. The first is the level of experience the vendor has working with public libraries and how well they understand library challenges such as funding, community outreach, management of computers in multiple locations, shortage of IT resources, and the like.

Although all services are accessible through the Web, some require a software download to every computer where the service will be accessed. In that scenario, when there's a software upgrade, every computer needs to be upgraded—whether it's in the library or in a student's home.

Online tutoring services need to be marketed on an ongoing basis. Libraries will benefit from working with a vendor who understands library marketing and provides ready access to customizable tools to support library marketing programs. Assistance with your launch event, gaining press exposure, and the sharing of best practices from successful peer libraries can all help boost program usage.

Some points to consider regarding customer support include

- the software download required for each computer;
- the availability of a dedicated client services representative for each client;
- the variety of professionally designed and customizable marketing tools; and

- the track record of successful library programs and case studies for best practices.

Price

To deliver online tutoring, a vendor needs to account for fixed as well as variable costs. This can be challenging when dealing with public libraries who offer the service free to anyone with a library card. Pricing models based solely on the size of the population served by the library or the number of library card holders don't account for differences in usage and may be unsustainable over the long term for the vendor. For example, take two libraries serving the same size population and paying the same amount for the service. Library A does two hundred sessions in a month and Library B does two thousand. Can a pricing model based solely on population be sustainable by the vendor who has to pay ten times more in tutor costs for Library B?

Some points to consider regarding pricing include

- the vendor's experience with the public library market;
- the number of public libraries using the vendor's product;
- the vendor's plans to account for usage variances in their pricing; and
- the vendor's understanding of funding alternatives for libraries.

Reporting

Delivering a one-to-one online tutoring service represents a departure for libraries from standard services, making it hard to classify and measure. It's not a database of information; it's not a library program in the sense of an event. It's a unique service offering and, as such, the ability to track usage down to the grade and subject level is

important for evaluating the audience being reached.

Libraries considering an online tutoring service should request copies of reports and be sure they are comprehensive in their frequency and coverage. Some features that make sense in a school environment might not be well-used in the public library setting, so school-focused features should have their usage reported separately. Before investing in a service, talk to some of the vendor's clients and ask to see sample reports. Be sure that usage of all aspects of the service are tracked and reported on. Ask to see student comments if they are part of the feedback survey.

Some points to consider regarding reports include

- the frequency of the reports;
- the completeness of the reports in covering all aspects of the service;
- the distinct usage reporting on separate services such as learning modules;
- the availability of user survey results, including comments from users; and
- the willingness of the vendor to share sample reports from other libraries.

Side-by-Side Comparisons

Libraries evaluating online tutoring services have found the best way to compare the student experience is to request trial periods from the vendors you are considering. Setting up a trial period will give your library the opportunity to

- evaluate usability of classroom features;
- evaluate the quality of the student's learning experience;
- compare services that offer various modules with those that offer real-time online help exclusively; and

- feel confident in your purchasing decision.

Once you log in to the service, keep your topics age appropriate. If you log in as a fourth-grade student, remember not to ask high school level questions. For the most effective trials, ask the tutors of the services you are evaluating the exact questions in the exact same way. You probably have plenty of examples in your library from real homework assignments. Test a range of questions such as

- general math problems, like multiplying and dividing fractions, finding the area of a cylinder, or finding the angles of a triangle;
- general writing examples with questions on punctuation or essay format to see how editing instruction is handled; and
- specific questions related to current events that will demonstrate how websites are used.

During your trial period, evaluate all aspects of the services, from initial login to ending the session. Here are some questions to keep in mind as your evaluation team tests each service:

- Was the service easy to use the first time?
- Did the tutor take time to thoroughly clarify the student's question?

- Did the tutor use webpages effectively, when appropriate?
- Did the tutor engage you or the student in the learning?
- Did you feel the tutor simply gave you or the student the answer?
- Did there seem to be any unusually long pauses as you waited for the tutor to respond that might lead you to believe the tutor was working with more than one student at a time?
- Did the tutor provide positive reinforcement?
- Did you have to set up a personal account with your e-mail address to receive writing assistance?
- How long did it take to complete the session?
- If you uploaded a paper for assistance, did the tutor look at it in real time, or did you have to wait for an alert by e-mail?
- After the tutor logged off, how long could you stay on to review the session?
- Was there a print button? If not, how easy was it to print the chat portion of the session?

Finally, don't forget to ask for and contact references. Talking with each vendor's current customers is the best way to evaluate the intangibles of the services such as technical support and the overall responsiveness of the company. These intangibles can make all the difference in how satisfied

you and your community are with your online tutoring service.

Conclusion

Online tutoring services offer your library an excellent opportunity to serve students and families, even when the library is closed. Libraries that have implemented these services receive praise from their communities and have the potential to generate great coverage in their local media. Students served by libraries with online tutoring return to the sites and tell their friends about the service.

There are differences among the vendors of online tutoring services, so as with all products and services you consider for your library, *caveat emptor*. In September 2008, the California State Library released an evaluation of online homework help services. If your library is considering adding online tutoring, take some time to review this report at www.library.ca.gov/lids/lids.html.

Good luck with your search! **YALS**

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Everywhere you look teens have cell phones or a Bluetooth attached to their ear. So it is no surprise that U.S. teen cell phone subscribers in 2007 numbered more than 16 million.¹ In addition, Jacqueline Lane, at the YPulse 2008 Mashup, a conference on teens and technology, reported that 84 percent of teens ages fourteen to eighteen have access to a cell phone and 80 percent of these teens use it daily.² A survey done in Britain found that “a majority of 16- to 24-year-olds would rather give up tea, coffee, alcohol, chocolate or sex rather than live without their cell phone for a month.”³ Clearly, professionals who work with teens cannot ignore this high level cell phone usage.

Ingenious Japanese Teens

Although American teens are avid cell phone users, Japanese teens have had earlier access to advanced cell phone technology. They also deal with crowded public transportation, with passengers crammed so closely together that it is impossible to open a book. Ingeniously, commuting Japanese teens who wanted to read began to read on their cell phones. Japanese cell phone companies have been streaming literary classics onto cell phones as early as 2003.⁴ But, as we know, many teens are not interested in reading the classics. They want to read books that relate to their present-day lives. With commuting time on their hands, along with an ever-present cell phone, Japanese teens began authoring their own cell phone novels, posting them in installments to free websites where others can read and offer input as the story is being written.

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Cell Phone Novels

140 Characters at a Time

Ruth Cox Clark

Defining a Cell Phone Novel

What exactly is a cell phone novel? Lisa Katayman defines the Japanese cell phone novel as containing “between 200 and 500 pages, with each page containing about 500 Japanese characters.”⁵ An English language cell phone screen, or page, is 140 characters. Cell phone novels are predominantly dialogue, very much like a graphic novel, but without the illustrations. Justin Norrie describes them this way:

They are written by first-time writers, using one-name pseudonyms, for an audience of young female readers. . . . The stories traverse teen romance, sex, drugs and other adolescent terrain in a succession of clipped one-liners, emoticons, and spaces (used to show that a character is thinking), all of which can be read easily on a mobile phone interface. Scene and character development are notably missing.⁶

They often deal with themes that high

school girls are interested in and are set in everyday locations such as school, home, or places teens socialize. There are more than 2,400 Japanese cell phone novels to choose from, mostly written by young women in their teens and early twenties. Not surprisingly, “more than half of the readers [of cell phone novels in Japan] are females.”⁷

Top Ten Bestsellers

Five of Japan’s 2007 top ten bestselling books began as cell phone novels. Rin wrote *If You*, one of the bestsellers, when she was a senior in high school, while commuting to her part-time job. She is now a nursery school teacher and still writing cell phone novels, often falling asleep with her phone in her hand.⁸ Rin uploaded her debut novel to a popular website for would-

Cool Name Generators

Try a name generator when you need a new online identity:

Fantasy Name Generator, www.rinkworks.com/namegen

Seven Sanctum Names, www.seventhsanctum.com/index-name.php

—The Teen Tech Week™ Committee

Gaming Themed Teen Fiction

Feed by M. T. Anderson
Crusader by Edward Bloor
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card
Eagle Strike by Anthony Horowitz
Invitation to the Game by Monica Hughes
Epic by Conor Kostick
Guitar Hero Songbook by Hal Leonard
RockBand Songs from MTV's Video Game by Hal Leonard
Wizards of the Game by David Lubar
The Virtual War by Gloria Skurzynski
Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson
Leo@fergusrules.com by Arne Tangherlini
Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde
Locked Inside by Nancy Werlin
Ran Van series by Biana Wieler
Lucky Wander Boy by D. B. Weiss

—The Teen Tech Week™ Committee

Comics and Manga with Gaming Themes

Portus by Jun abe
Kimmie66 by Aaron Alexovich
Angelic Layer by Clamp
Megatokyo by Fred Gallagher
Penny Arcade by Jerry Holkins
Hikaru No Go by Yumi Hotta
.hack by Rei Izumi
Yu-gi-oh! GX by Naoyuki Kageyama
Warcraft: the Sunwell Trilogy by Richard A. Knaak
PvP by Scott Kurtz
Beet, the Vandel Buster by Riku Sanjo
Yu-Gi-Oh! Duelist by Kazuki Takahashi
MegaMan NT Warrior by Ryo Takamisaki

—The Teen Tech Week Committee

be authors, Maho no i-rando, which allows readers to comment on each installment, thus creating a venue for ongoing conversations among members of a community of readers and writers. The number of novels on this site now exceeds one million.⁹ Rin admits she had never written anything other than text and instant messages prior to her cell phone novel. Nevertheless, her novel, full of emoticons, published as a 142-page hardcover book, sold more than 400,000 copies as of early 2008.¹⁰

Writing and Reading as Social Events

Cell phone novel writing and reading is a social event. In a January 2008 posting to his Computer World blog, Mike Elgan noted that the authors of cell phone novels are using an “available publishing technology to have a dialog—not a monologue—with their peers.”¹¹ This connectivity is an important factor when considering the potential of the cell phone novel phenomena happening in the United States. As Zachary, a teen interviewed for a *New York Times* article debating literacy observed, “The Web is more of a conversation. . . . Books are more one-way.”¹² For those teens who want a conversation with a book or the author, the authoring or reading of cell phone novels suits their technology-rich style of social networking.

Today's teens have used or been exposed to cell phones all of their lives, so the use of this medium for communicating is natural to them. Some teens can type on a cell phone keypad faster than they can on a computer keyboard. An expert in Japanese literature at Waseda University, Chiaki Ishihara, goes so far as to suggest that “this tool called the cellphone instilled in them the desire to write.”¹³ Yoko Hani, an editor with Goma Books and publisher of three bestselling cell phone novels,

states, “Readers and writers often overlap. In many cases, readers who were inspired by stories on the sites have started writing themselves.”¹⁴

Potential for American Cell Phone Novels

Will American teens, like Japanese teens, choose to read, let alone write, novels on a cell phone? The technology and software are already available. Although still in its infancy, cell phone authorship in the United States is occurring through web-sites such as Quillpill (www.quillpill.com), which allows multiple modes of entry. The site boasts that “users have posted their stories using desktop computers, iPhones, cell phones, mobile gaming platforms like the PSP and DS, and even a Wii.”¹⁵ In a response to a request for a login for the Quillpill beta site, Derek Maune, CEO of Synthetic Entertainment, which operates Quillpill, responded,

The cellphone novel phenomena in Japan convinced an entire generation that had been uninterested in literature to start reading and even producing popular fiction themselves. . . . Literature has its ups and downs throughout history, but I do not agree with the popular idea that's out there right now, which foretells doom for the written word due to the advancement of Internet usage. Rather, I believe writing can be brought online in a form that will invigorate traditional authors, hobby writers, young authors, and even people who have never really thought of writing anything more than a diary blog.¹⁶

Whether Mr. Maune is correct in relation to the roles the cell phone and the

Internet will play in who authors the posts to Quillpill, only time will tell. Because more U.S. teens have cell phones than laptops or desktop computers, the opportunity to author and respond to written works on the cell phone keypad may well appeal to them.¹⁷ A writer- and reader-interactive mode of authorship would add a new venue to teens' already technology enhanced forms of social networking. After all, J. K. Rowling began her bestselling series about a young wizard in a social environment, a coffee shop. Who's to say a future *New York Times* bestseller won't be a cell phone novel written by an American teen hanging out with friends in Starbucks? **YALS**

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Budget Video Production

Yes, You Can Do It Too!

Rachel Magee

There are many reasons to use video technology at your library. Making videos can give teens a unique way to express themselves, and it is incredibly fun. Additionally, when teens have experience making videos, they have a better understanding of how film, television, and video are created. This understanding helps young people to critically examine the media they consume each day. In short, video-making combines the best of education and recreation.

Unfortunately, librarians often avoid using video technology. There can be a perceived lack of knowledge about video production, and there are ever-present budget issues. But these are much smaller obstacles than they seem. This article will provide you with strategies to incorporate video into your young adult programs in easy, inexpensive ways.

One thing to remember is that making videos is something we are already well prepared for! How much time do we, let alone the teens we serve, spend watching television, movies, and video feeds? All video is designed to mimic the way our eyes and our emotions work. Watch a few of your favorite movies and break down the way each shot or camera setup is put

in sequence—what do you see, when, and why? In general, emotional scenes are close up and nonemotional scenes have a wider view. When someone says something shocking to another, we want to see how the second person reacts.

Detailed planning makes better videos with less expense. Start by writing your script and then drawing, or storyboarding, the shots before you pick up the camera. Thinking about what your audience will want to see can guide your storyboarding, and drawing what the camera will show will enable you to see the movie without spending any money. Additionally, when you know what you want to say and what you want to show before you get the camera in your hands, you will be able to use a shot checklist instead of making it up as you go along. If you practice several times, also planning where you will put the camera, you will be able to use your time more efficiently.

One easy way to make videos does not

even require a video camera. Video is essentially the marriage of sound and images to tell a story. No one says that videos have to be full of *video*. Putting images in sequence creates a visual story—just look at any children's picture book for inspiration on how to do this. Take photographs with your digital camera or digitize traditional photographs. Create a slideshow in Microsoft PowerPoint or a similar program, placing photographs in sequence. You can increase the effect by adding music and narration, both of which are options with this type of presentation software.

If you are interested in doing more, consider renting a camera and, if possible, a microphone. A microphone that attaches to the camera is the easiest to use. A tripod, which attaches to the bottom of the camera, can also be a valuable addition because it holds the camera steady, freeing your hands to zoom in and out or rotate the camera from side to side. Many camera stores offer rental options, which can start as low as \$20 a day for a camera.

Video-making is a process that can adapt to the time you and your teens have. You can write and shoot in a day, or you can spend a summer planning scripts, backdrops, and costumes. If you allow for planning time, you can make an incredible video on a small budget. **YALS**

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Few teen librarians would argue the importance of technology in library services to young people. Today's library calendars are packed with gaming and computer programs; library websites proudly link to teen-generated podcasts and social networking pages, and more and more libraries are adding text alerts to their options for staying in contact with library users. But, as recent posts on the YALSA blog have pointed out, it may be that teens with special needs are being inadvertently left out of this new frontier.¹ Approaching accessibility can be intimidating, especially for those who don't think of themselves as particularly tech-savvy, but there are more than enough resources available to help any librarian make sure all of their teens can enjoy the technology today's libraries have to offer.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 8.5 percent of Americans age fourteen and under and 10.5 percent of fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds have some type of disability provided for under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), defined as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities."² Another source shows that in 2006, a total of 2,997,346—or roughly 12 percent of teens between the ages of twelve and seventeen—received special education services in the United States and outlying areas. This number reflects any student receiving services for a disability included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA lists the categories of disability as mental retardation; hearing impairments including deafness, speech or language impairments; visual impairments including blindness, emotional disturbance,

orthopedic impairments; autism; traumatic brain injury; other health impairments, multiple disabilities; deaf-blindness; specific learning disabilities; and developmental delay, but each state has its own criteria to determine if a student is eligible for services under a particular disability.³ This means that easily one in ten of our potential teen library users has a special need that can affect how they use the library.

The ADA requires that libraries provide equitable access to all services for people with special needs. This includes reasonable accommodations for technology, though there is continuing debate over how this applies to websites.⁴ Learning about assistive and adaptive technologies can be intimidating; a good place to start is the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) Tool Kit tip sheet on assistive technology (and the many other tip sheets in the Tool Kit) for an overview of what the different products

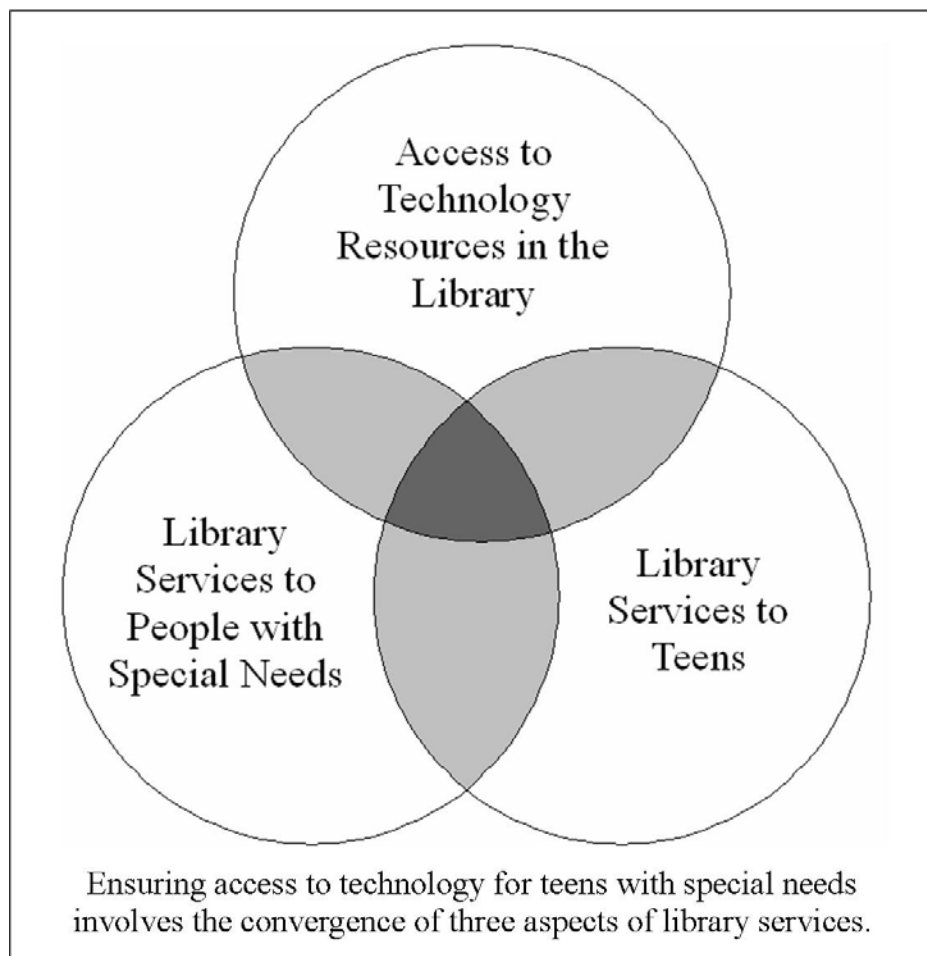
offer.⁵ William Reed, assistant head and Cleveland Public Library's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, also suggests looking at resources like World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative, Section 508, and the U.S. Access Board for a better understanding of accessible technology (see Resource Guide).⁶ Barbara Huntington, youth and special services consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, believes that public libraries should offer services such as accessible workstations, electronic and technology tools (adapted keyboard, trackballs, switches, Braille printers, scanners, and adaptive software), accessible program or meeting aids (microphones and real-time captioning) and accessible library webpages, in addition to accessible formats for media, including recorded, Braille, and large-print books, closed captioned videos, and materials in languages other than English.⁷ Sharon Rawlins, youth services consultant at the New Jersey State Library, adds that while adaptive technology may be expensive, libraries should have at least one computer equipped with some type of screen reader software (which converts print into speech) or have a Kurzweil machine (which converts text to speech or Braille).⁸

Technology for Every Teen @ your library®

Vikki C. Terrile

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Many of the areas where teen librarians focus their technology programming can pose real difficulties for teens with disabilities, even with assistive hardware. In his post to the YALSA blog, Joseph Wilk refers to a recent article about how lack of captioning and narration on many websites are limiting use by people with visual and hearing impairments.⁹ This can also affect teens with learning disabilities. For example, while social networking sites remain hugely popular with teens, many of these sites lock out users with certain types of disabilities before they can even open an account. These sites use CAPTCHA, a visual verification code shown as a display of distorted letters and numbers that cannot be deciphered by software to ensure that people, not computers, are trying to set up accounts. This technology works so well, in fact, that screen reader programs cannot interpret the code, so for users with vision impairments, dyslexia, or other learning difficulties, trouble interpreting the graphic can prevent them from going beyond the signup page.¹⁰ Since this information made Web headlines in January 2008, Facebook and Google have added an audio option to CAPTCHA, but CAPTCHA may show up unexpectedly in other places teens visit on the Web. Of course, anyone who has tried to buy tickets online has run into that window of weird characters (Ticketmaster does offer an audio verification option), but during Virtual Library Day on the Hill at ALA Annual Conference 2008, we found that many elected officials use CAPTCHA (without an audio option) to authenticate the electronic messages they receive. Reed also points out that few social networking sites are alt-tagged: equipped with descriptive text as an alternative to images that is read by screen readers and search engines. One way around these problems is for adaptive technology users to use the different features (like blogs or instant messaging) separate from the larger site so teens with special needs can be creative about how they use these features.¹¹



Video game programs continue to gain popularity, allowing teens to play in a social setting they don't get at home on their couch. Elizabeth Burns, youth services consultant at the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped, says that some of the most popular games at her library are accessible for teens with special needs; the Nintendo Wii sports games work well for teens with visual impairments, especially boxing, baseball, and bowling.¹² Huntington says a teen who uses a wheelchair and has good use of his hands can participate in a Guitar Hero program quite easily.¹³ There are many resources on the Web for gamers, educators, and game designers about using and building accessible games such as the notes from a June 2008

presentation to MIT's Gambit game lab that offers practical insight on the issues facing gamers with disabilities.¹⁴

Today's teens are technologically resilient, making them able to figure out a way to get to the information and services they want even if it is not obviously accessible. If your library's adaptive technology tools are only on computers designated for adult use, look for creative ways to ensure that teens have access to those machines in ways that are comfortable for them. You could also invite teens who use adaptive or assistive technology to show other teen and adult patrons (and staff members!) how it works.¹⁵ Reed suggests that simply asking teens with special needs how they use technology or having them test Library 2.0

tools and utilities for accessibility will not only increase their access but can improve access awareness within the library.¹⁶

Having a strong virtual presence is important for all libraries that support teen services, so work with your teens to create virtual services that are as teen friendly as they are accessible. Look at how you can have audio options for print information or alternative text and captioning for pictures and video. If you are fortunate enough to have an IT department or webmaster, they should be included in conversations with the teens so that they can understand the teens' needs and offer technologically sound suggestions. If you are directly responsible for maintaining your library's teen webpages, consider having the teens themselves work on creating the transcripts and captioning, for example, of the podcasts and videos they produce.

Once your library's teen webpage is fully accessible, it can become a true gateway to all your services. For teens with adaptive technology at home, virtual programs can eliminate transportation and mobility barriers. An online book discussion may facilitate participation for a variety of teens who might not participate at the library, teens with speech problems, for example, or those in a hospital with a long-term illness or even teens in detention.¹⁷ Newsletters, e-mail updates, and a frequently updated website are all easy ways to let teen library patrons know about new virtual programs in addition to what is happening in house. These tools can also be effective ways to receive feedback about what you are offering. Consider adding a virtual component to your teen advisory board so that teens who cannot or do not come into the library can have more of a voice in planning library services.¹⁸

When considering access, don't forget to think beyond technology to the many other programs and services you offer teens. Physical teen spaces and collections should also be as welcoming and inclusive as possible, even if you do not think there

Accessibility Resource Guide

General Information

Youth with Special Needs: A Resource and Planning Guide for Wisconsin Public Libraries, <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/ysnpl.html>.

A resource and planning guide intended to provide guidance and practical suggestions to ensure that all youth with special needs have appropriate, convenient, and equitable access to materials and technology at public libraries.

New Jersey State Library, www.njstatelib.org/LDB/Disabilities/dsequa2.php#programs.
Information for libraries serving people with special needs.

Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP), www.csllpreads.org/diversity/diversity.htm.

Resources and information from the CSLP Diversity Committee on creating a more inclusive community of summer readers.

Accessibility

American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Home Page, www.ada.gov.
Information and technical assistance on the ADA.

The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), www.w3.org/WAI.

WAI is working with organizations around the world to develop strategies, guidelines, and resources to help make the Web accessible to people with disabilities.

Section 508, www.section508.gov.

A website for Federal employees and the general public about Section 508, which requires that Federal agencies' electronic and information technology be accessible to people with disabilities.

United States Access Board, www.access-board.gov.

The Access Board is an independent Federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Think Accessible Before You Buy, www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/ascla/asclaprotocols/thinkaccessible/default.cfm.

An ASCLA Tool Kit on accessible technology for libraries.

are teens with special needs in your community (there are!). Rawlins says things like high-interest and low-reading-level books, large-print teen books, audiobooks, and e-books for teens, and shelving and computers that are easily accessible are all things that will make the library easier to use for a variety of teen consumers.¹⁹ Make

sure all patrons know that Talking Book Libraries provide services to anyone who has difficulty reading print (including patrons with physical and reading disabilities) for free. This is also a good time to consider your library's policies and procedures to make sure they are not unintentionally alienating teens or anyone else with special

Avatar Me!

An avatar is a computer user's representation of himself or herself. They allow you to be more anonymous online. Here are sites where you can make an avatar for free:

Doppel Me, www.doppelme.com.

Gaia Dream Avatar, www.tektek.org/dream.

Lego Head, www.reasonablyclever.com/blockhead.

Otaku Avatar Maker: www.moeruavatar.com/index_en.shtml.

Portrait Illustration Maker, http://illustrationmaker.abi-station.com/index_en.shtml

Yahoo Avatars, <http://avatars.yahoo.com>.

Try these virtual doll makers to create images of your friends or favorite characters: Some Virtual Doll Makers, <http://elouai.com/doll-makers.php>.

Dollz Mania, www.dollzmania.com.

Edit an existing photo online, www.picnik.com.

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needs. Consider using universal design as your service model. This concept, borrowed from the building industry, shifts the focus from adapting existing or adding extra services for people with special needs to creating an array of services that will be more easily used by all consumers. According to Rachel Gould, children and youth services librarian at Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library, program and outreach plans that use a universal design approach and integrate multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles will benefit all library users, including those with special needs, without singling anyone out.²⁰

There may be some barriers to teens' library use that you are not even aware of—things teen customers perceive as unwelcoming. Burns points out that valuing

print above other formats is a common example of this; excluding audiobooks from summer reading tells teens who listen to books that they are not welcome.²¹ "Truly realize that there are many ways to read," says Gould. "Listening to books is not any less valuable than reading print."²² Of course, the biggest barrier to access may be the attitudes of staff. The fact that you are not seeing teens with special needs from your community in your library may be an indicator that somewhere along the way teens received a message that they are not welcome.²³ If you hear from teens that this is the case, bring their concerns to your administration to see what can be done to improve the behavior of staff. Consider whether this is an issue with teens in general, people with disabilities, or some combination of the two.

Through outreach efforts and a commitment to the participation of a wide and diverse population of your teen community, you will learn what matters to them and may also discover what has happened (or not) to make them feel welcome in the library and at programs. Use what you learn to inform your work with staff to ensure that all patrons—including teens and people with special needs of any age—are welcome and can have equal access to the materials and services your library offers.

YALS

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Short on time and money this Teen Tech Week? Here are a few ideas on how your library can participate in Teen Tech Week, without giving you a nervous breakdown!

Idea 1: Hold a Contest

Last year for my Teen Tech Week I held a “best of” contest. I let teens recommend and then vote for the best video game, movie, TV show, YouTube video, and website. My teens enjoyed the opportunity to share what they loved, but I used this information to evaluate our collection. I used both a paper and an online ballot, but the teens preferred to fill out the papers at my desk and then talk about their favorite media.

Pro: Great for teen input.

Pro: Reaches teens who do not come to regular programs.

Pro: Can recommend books and other media teens might like on the basis of what they voted for.

Con: Many teens complained that “best book” was left off the list.

Idea 2: Poster Tag Clouds and Comments

Similar to the contest idea, you could also put blank poster boards on the end panels of your stacks asking the teens a general question. I put up two posters last summer before *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was released that had at the top: “Snape will Betray” and “Snape is Loyal.” I was surprised to see the responses and arguments that appeared on the posters. Over time I’ve created new posters and questions ranging from “What is your favorite manga?” to “If you could chose only two movies to ever watch again, what would they be?”

Teen Tech Week™ on a Budget

Jami Schwarzwald

Pro: Great for teen input.

Pro: Reaches teens who do not come to regular programs.

Con: Provide pencils, not markers, to write on poster, in case you get anyone who wants to add “off-topic” pictures or phrases.

Con: This medium is anonymous. Teens who disagree often try to write bigger or cross out others, and teens who agree don’t get a chance to correct.

Idea 3: After-Hours Alternative

Often you can’t afford to have an after-hours program, but one of the draws to these programs is the ability to use all of the public Internet computers. Provide this by reserving computers at the library just for teens for a specified hour. If you want to have a focused program, consider printing a list of avatar-creation sites, ask the teens to post reviews on a blog or teenreads.

com, or compile of list of best online-game websites.

Pro: Uses equipment you already have.

Pro: Gives teens without the Internet at home more time to engage online.

Con: Do this during nonpeak hours so nonteen Internet users are not displaced.

Idea 4: Buy a Flip Video Camera

This idea does cost about \$100, but shouldn’t use much of your time. Like a digital camera, the Flip Video can be used to record impromptu actions of teens like book and media reviews, Dance Dance Revolution skills, or something positive you can show staff or your board. Flip makes it easy to store and share videos. All of the software to view and edit is saved on the camera, where you can easily copy to your PC or e-mail to the teens. If you

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Get Your Game On with These Online Games

Puzzles

Falling Sand, <http://chir.ag/stuff/sand>.
Set Daily Puzzle, www.setgame.com/set.
SuDoku, www.dailysudoku.com/sudoku.
Virtual Jigsaw, www.jigzone.com.

Host Sites for Flash Games

Addicting Games, www.addictinggames.com. Try the Flash Version of Portal.
Alien Hominid, <http://alien-hominid.freeonlinegames.com>.
All Girl Arcade, www.allgirlarcade.com.
Armor Games, www.armorgames.com.
Kongregate, www.kongregate.com.
MiniClip, www.miniclip.com/games. Try Youda Camper.
MySpace Games, <http://games.myspace.com>.
WiiCade, www.wiicade.com.
XGen Studios, www.xgenstudios.com.

Web-Based Strategy Games and Games with a Message

Darfur is Dying, www.darfurisdying.com.
iFiction, www.ifiction.org.
Ikariam, www.ikariam.org.
Librarian Dash, www.library.cmu.edu/Libraries/etc/game2/game2.swf or www.library.cmu.edu/Libraries/etc.
Line Rider, <http://linerider.com>.
McVideo Game, www.mcvideogame.com.
Now What, www.nowwhat.com.
Ogame, www.ogame.org.
Renaissance Kingdoms, www.renaissancekingdoms.com.
Sol, www.freeport.de/Sol.
Type Racer, <http://play.typeracer.com>.

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are daring, you can also purchase a digital photo frame for your teen area where you can display book covers and videos.

- Pro: Gives teens a chance to comment and discuss their favorite mediums without being in one place.
- Pro: Documents for staff what you do and the positive effect it has on teens.
- Pro: Easy to use, even if you don't know a lot about computers.
- Con: Encourage teens to not say their names when being recorded.
- Con: Before you post on YouTube or another public website, get the teens' parents to sign a photo/video release form.
- Con: If you don't have a digital photo frame, then there are not many ways to share videos with teens within the library.

Idea 5: Have a DS Meetup

A DS is the handheld gaming console made by Nintendo. There are many games available for it that allows players to play together if their friends have a DS and a second copy of the game. Consider inviting teens and tweens who have a DS to come to the library to play together.

- Pro: Gives gamers a chance to socialize.
- Pro: If you advertise at game stores and movie theatres, you may get new teens in the library doors.
- Con: Gamers bring the games themselves so they may not bring multiplayer versions.
- Con: Teens may share equipment, so provide masking tape and markers for everyone to put their name on the

games and the DS before they start playing.

Con: Equipment is pocket-size, so make sure that everyone understands the risks in sharing or leaving games unattended.

Idea 6: Borrow Equipment

If you don't have the expertise or the money to buy gaming equipment, try to find someone who does. Sometimes local game stores, computer stores, and even comic book and hobby stores may have tech-savvy adults who would come to your library to offer a program. Many libraries have tested gaming programs by having staff and teens bring in TVs, gaming consoles, and games. If you don't have gaming, you could give this a try.

- Pro: Gives teens a place to socialize and play games with their friends.
- Pro: A successful program in libraries all over the country.
- Con: Equipment could get damaged.
- Con: If you are using older TVs, make sure they have a port for the red, yellow, and white AV cables. (You can find adapters at Radio Shack.)
- Con: Make sure you have the right games for teen appeal and the console you are borrowing. Best choices are *Rock Band*, *Guitar Hero*, *Dance Dance Revolution*, *Super Smash Brothers Brawl*, and *Mario Kart*. **YALS**

The Structure of Power in Young Adult Problem Novels

By Brian W. Sturm and Karin Michel

Young adult (YA) reading interests and preferences have been the subject of ongoing study for decades.¹ These and other studies show conflicting results about what adolescents are reading in terms of genres and formats, but some trends do emerge. Girls tend to read more (and more fiction) than boys²; adolescents seem to prefer realistic stories featuring teens (though fantasy, mystery, and horror/supernatural are recurring favorites); and, according to one study by Barbara Samuels, one of the favorite types of fiction for adolescents is problem novels.³ Adolescents possess an increasing variety of choices for reading materials (in print and online), so how do adolescent problem novels capture the interest of young adults and adults alike?

The World of Adolescence

YAs who are twelve to eighteen years old are in a transitional period of their lives that is fraught with change. Their bodies are maturing physically and chemically, their minds are expanding beyond their egocentric childhood confines, they are developing a social network that far exceeds physical proximity (technology has redefined our understanding of community in this regard), and they are exploring emotions, spirituality, and possibilities

that didn't enter their frame of reference as children. As early as 1904, psychologist G. Stanley Hall described adolescence as a series of "antithetic impulses," including overactivity and sluggishness, euphoria and despondence, egotism and self-abasement, selfishness and altruism, seclusiveness and gregariousness, sensitivity and callousness, radicalism and conservatism, and precociousness and foolishness.⁴ He viewed adolescence as a chaotic time in which young people had to contend with the extremes of life in all aspects of their development. In 1973 Gisela Konopka found similar traits in her article describing the requirements for healthy development of adolescents. She explains that adolescence is characterized by

- audacity and insecurity;
- loneliness;
- psychological vulnerability;
- mood swings;
- peer group need; and
- the need to be argumentative and emotional.⁵

More recently, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has described the middle school and early high school years (approximately ages thirteen to sixteen) as characterized by (1) a movement toward independence (struggle with sense of identity, moodiness, feeling awkward about one's self and one's body, occasional rudeness, and a tendency to return to childish behavior, especially when

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stressed); (2) cognitive change (still present oriented but a growing array of intellectual interests); (3) developing sexuality (increased interest in sex but often shy about it as they are also concerned about their attractiveness to others, frequently changing relationships and sexual experimentation, and a concern about being “normal”); and (4) defining values and developing a sense of self (testing rules and limits, choosing role models, and developing ideals).⁶

What all of this literature addresses is the upheaval and unease that many adolescents face during this time in their lives. Certainly there are wonderful times as well, filled with joy, excitement, love, a sense of belonging to a peer group (whether physical or digital), and wonder,⁷ but many YAs also find the transition to adulthood filled with *sturm und drang* (storm and stress). Reed Larson and Linda Asmussen offer several possible explanations for this. They discuss a 1989 study that found “first, that our adolescents experienced more negative events in their lives than did our preadolescents and, second, that those who reported more negative events experienced a greater frequency of negative states.”⁸ There is a correlation, then, between the sheer number of problems and negative effect, though establishing a causal link is difficult. They also suggest that adolescence is “associated with an expanding horizon, an increased awareness of a wider social, political, and economic world . . . [and] investments in this wider world of concerns potentially increases [*sic*] their area of vulnerability to worry, disappointment, and hurt.”⁹ Finally, they claimed that young adults are increasingly able to

see beneath the surface of things, including an ability to perceive the point of view of others and analyze their own and others’ emotions . . . [and] these abilities may lead to greater sensitivity, to a deeper set of

concerns, standards, and expectations—which are more vulnerable to being disappointed.¹⁰

YA Contemporary Realistic Fiction and Problem Novels

“Contemporary realistic fiction is derived from actual circumstances, with realistic settings and characters who face problems and opportunities that are within the range of what is possible in real life.”¹¹ The characters in realistic fiction “resemble real people; live in a place that is or could be real; participate in a plausible, if not probable, series of events; are presented with a dilemma that is of interest to [the reader]; and discover a realistic solution.”¹² In short, the characters, settings, situations, and resolutions in these novels strike the reader as plausible; they *could* happen.

Realistic fiction for young adults changed in the late 1960s, when publishers felt that the social and educational values had changed enough to allow them to publish more edgy stories for this market. This new realism, as it was called (to separate it from the more romanticized stories that were deemed appropriate for children), began to explore the problems and crises particular to adolescence with increasing candor and sophistication. Young adult authors put adolescence under intense scrutiny and began to examine the myriad dilemmas, dysfunctions, and difficulties that the young people of the day faced. As life for this age group became more complex and varied, and as opportunities continued to open up to them (created, in part, by increased wealth, delayed onset of work, and, more recently, technological innovation), the novels, too, included more—and more varied—problems for their characters to face, and the term problem novel was ascribed to this developing subgenre of young adult realistic fiction.

In 1981, Sheila Egoff described the problem novel. She claimed that while “most of these books could be destroyed on literary grounds, or challenged as amateurish forays into the disciplines of psychology and sociology, as a group they are formidable in their popularity and influence.”¹³ She explains that the subgenre is recognizable in that

a protagonist is laden with grievances and anxieties that grow out of some form of alienation from the adult world, to which he or she is usually hostile; sentences and paragraphs are short; locutions are colloquial and language is flat, without nuance, and often emotionally numb; vocabulary is limited; the narrative is almost always in the first person and its confessional tone is rigorously self-centered; sex is discussed openly; and there is an obligatory inclusion of expletives.¹⁴

She further describes that adults are usually the teens’ biggest problems (they are inept, uncaring, or downright callous and insensitive), encounters (with drugs, sex, or other hitherto taboo subjects) are explicitly described, and “reflecting the fatalism and resignation of the young who see their lives as compounded of one problem after another, none of them with any hope of resolution, some of these novels are almost existential in not having a conclusion.”¹⁵

While the term “problem novel” has been used synonymously with realistic fiction in general, it has come to represent the subgenre of “wayward children”—contemporary realistic fiction that exhibits a nearly unrealistic number of problems, poor quality of writing, pedestrian language, and formulaic plots. Patty Campbell described this formula:

A teenager (or a friend) becomes a victim of a social problem. This young person is statistically typical

("The average rape subject is . . ."). He or she struggles with the problem, and the struggle defines the issues for the reader. The good guys suggest the approved solutions and mouth the accepted current thinking; the bad guys do the opposite. There is a big scene that crystallizes the horror of the problem. *Secondary characters* are destroyed by it, while *protagonists* are badly damaged but survive with hope.¹⁶

Despite these professional critiques (and perhaps even because of them) and the contempt of the literati (much like comics, series fiction, romance, fantasy, and other genres), problem novels continue to capture the interest of droves of young adults. How?

Alleen Nilsen and Kenneth Donelson explain the stages of literary appreciation in their book, *Literature for Today's Young Adult*.¹⁷ They propose a seven-level, age-related hierarchy of appreciation that describes the most common stance toward reading of each age.

Stages of Literary Appreciation

As table 1 depicts, the young adults in junior high and high school look to their reading to identify with story characters—to see themselves in their reading—and to explore the "other." They want the familiarity to help them feel they are not alone (despite what peers or society might tell them), and they want the novelty to broaden their horizons and to play with future possibilities. Problem novels address

TABLE 1. The Stages of Literary Appreciation

Level	Optimal Age	Stage
7	Adulthood to Death	Aesthetic appreciation
6	College	Reading widely
5	High School	Venturing beyond self
4	Junior High	Finding oneself in literature
3	Late Elementary	Losing oneself in literature
2	Primary Grades	Learning to decode
1	Birth to Kindergarten	Understanding of pleasure and profit in print and pictures

both of these needs. They offer a familiar (i.e., formulaic) structure, and their characters often reappear in further novels (i.e., problem novels in series). Readers see characters in familiar settings who do familiar things and face similar problems. On the other hand, they also encounter problems with which they have not dealt, and they sometimes find coping strategies for their issues that they had not considered, opening the door to personal growth and development. In short, they can see who they are and who they might become.

While the protagonists in these stories may be statistically average, many of the problems in these novels are statistically significant. Statistics on adolescent crime, smoking, drinking, sex, violence, pregnancy, illiteracy, school failure, abuse, etc., abound,¹⁸ and many give the impression that, indeed, young adulthood is a time of chaos, extremism, and problems. As Mary Gallagher claimed in 1990,

Is it any wonder that in the recent past, two of the most popular types of young adult literature have been the problem oriented junior novel and the crisis book that features courageous young people, in either true-to-life or fictionalized accounts, who are forced to face and cope with seemingly insurmountable physical, social, and/or emotional obstacles?¹⁹

Sheila Egoff, in her 1979 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, described four possible reasons that problem novels engage adolescents. "One explanation—or perhaps claim is the more accurate word—is that the problem novel has therapeutic value." She reasoned that young people could find new solutions to their own issues by reading about characters in similar situations; at the very least, they might realize that they were not alone. Just as Nilsen and Donelson explain the attraction of the familiar and the new, Egoff's second reason for the appeal of problem novels is that those whose lives are not problem-filled might find these novels exotic and therefore interesting. They can use them to explore how others live: "Just as adult, upper-class suburbanites find *The Godfather* absorbing, so well brought up girls may find a kind of romance and excitement in the 'hard-boiled' naturalism of the problem novels." A third option proposed by Egoff is that a problem novel "wins its audience by flattery. Children want to feel grown-up and problem novels offer to youngsters—in simple language that they can follow perfectly well—the implication that they are ready to deal with issues and themes that are indisputably 'adult.'"²⁰ Finally, Egoff proposes that problem novels appeal due to the titillation of "prurience and peer pressure":

How welcome it must be to find between the covers of a book words and subjects that have been considered

taboo and may still be so in an individual child's home or school environment. While they may give the child a delicious *frisson*, they also spell respectability. . . . Not to have read Judy Blume seems as socially unacceptable as not being familiar with the latest "in" television show.²¹

These articles and books address several values of problem novels. They discuss the comfort of seeing yourself in literature, the information potential of finding new coping strategies to existing problems, the intrigue of new (and often taboo) situations, the flattery of considering young readers old enough to cope with adult content, and the social pressure to be exposed to these situations even if only in print. What we find missing in these analyses is the way in which the form of the problem novel creates an emotional response in the reader. Perhaps the true power of problem novels lies in that not only can readers identify with elements of the *story*, but they can also identify with the feelings of chaos and exaggeration that the *structure* of these particular books creates within us. While we may logically dismiss many of these stories as vapid or trite exaggerations of reality, we cannot disconnect emotionally from the feelings of upheaval and anxiety that the books engender and that are so common to the adolescent experience. We suggest that the same authorial techniques that make critics deride the subgenre (formulae, common language, gross exaggeration, and so on) are precisely the necessary ones to make readers feel the discomfort that often accompanies young adulthood.

Angst and the Situations that Arouse It

Young adults describe their lives in varied ways, but a key ingredient of many of the

descriptions is the experience of angst or stress. According to Janet Gans, nearly half of all young adults report problems coping with stress in the home or school.²² The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *angst* as "anxiety, anguish, neurotic fear, guilt, or remorse" and *stress* as "an adverse circumstance that disturbs, or is likely to disturb, the normal physiological or psychological functioning of an individual."²³ Other related emotions mentioned in the literature on adolescence include feelings of insecurity, alienation, loneliness, hostility, anger, depression, embarrassment, disgust, frustration, confusion, and worry.²⁴

The experience of stress arises when adolescents face "conflict with parents and insecurity in the home; new demands for independent behavior; heightened sexual and aggressive drives and increased demands for sexual activity; school change from elementary, middle, or junior high school to high school; increased academic demands; poor progress in school; peer expectations; and peer rejection."²⁵ Other sources cite such issues as personal appearance, parental divorce, crime or other social violence, financial uncertainty or poverty, high-risk activities (sports, drugs, weapons, etc.), thoughts of death or suicide, teasing, bullying, indecision, and chronic illness or disability.²⁶

How do these issues manifest in the structure of problem novels? One of the complaints of critics is that these stories contain an unrealistic number of problems. Each character faces a litany of difficulties that, in total, strike the reader (and often the characters for that matter) as insurmountable. Feeling submerged in problems leaves the characters depressed, burdened, and staring at repeated failure leading to a sense of their inability to cope with life, and readers who identify with these characters are made to feel the same way. While readers can intellectually distance themselves from the characters' situations—and even laugh at their exaggerated

presentation—their emotions ride the rollercoaster along with the characters. Not only are the problems more numerous, they are also more exotic.

We're probably going to see more 'zaniness,' as well as other kinds of literary experimentation, in books written for young readers because authors are being forced to work harder to involve their readers' emotions. The effect of living in a global village is that we are privy to so many people's problems that we simply don't have the energy to empathize with all those we hear about.²⁷

Once habituated to excessive problems, readers require more and wilder issues to keep their attention.

The short paragraphs and limited vocabulary prevalent in these novels serve a dual purpose. First, they make the reading level easy, enabling even reluctant readers to access the stories and providing a comfort level that helps engage readers' attention. Short paragraphs also increase the perceived speed with which events take place, leading readers forward quickly in the plot and building suspense, but also creating a hurried, sometimes frenzied pace that can leave readers breathless and shaken. The limited vocabulary can also serve to engender feelings of unease, as the short words and lack of figurative language can create a staccato rhythm that lacks fluidity.

The humor in many of these novels is that of sarcasm, or what Alleen Nilsen calls "gallows humor." "Gallows humor does not try to solve problems nor move readers to action as much as to focus their attention on life's absurdities and inconsistencies. Part of its power is that it frightens and threatens us at the same time that it amuses us."²⁸ As readers struggle with the emotional and intellectual paradox of finding story events simultaneously frightening

and funny, they experience the feeling of discord that often accompanies wrestling with a conundrum.

The language of the writing is also typically fairly commonplace. This makes for ease of reading and ease of identification with the protagonist (we needn't be special to see ourselves in these characters), which develops the reader's sense of comfort, but simultaneously this common language can be more raw and emotionally evocative. The prevalence of expletives is, perhaps, the most obvious example of this emotionally charged language. We would disagree with Sheila Egoff that the language is "emotionally numb." Indeed, its lack of color and nuance serves to create precisely the edginess on which these novels thrive: the terror of a pervasive grey and the anxiety of monotony (boredom is a significant source of stress for adolescents).²⁹

Though the language may be banal, the descriptions of events, particularly taboo ones, are often lurid and explicit. There is certainly a titillation in this that gives adolescents a voyeuristic pleasure, and they are safely distanced from it by the pages of the book and a reading experience that they control, but with these literary encounters comes (for many adolescents) an embarrassment and even guilt about these windows into illicit activity. Again, readers are subject to a disconcerting paradox—the attraction and repulsion of the taboo—and navigating these waters can make readers uneasy.

The first-person perspective of many of these novels heightens the complicity of the reader in these taboo topics because readers are meant to identify with the "I" in the book. Indeed, it is difficult *not* to do so. The word "I" is inherently self-referential; it refers to whoever speaks it. Each time the character speaks, the reader reads "I" and treats the experience as if it were his or her own. If the character has a life steeped in problems, the reader takes on those problems—in addition to his or her own real life issues—increasing the sense of burden

and anxiety.

The formula in some problem novels acts in two contrasting ways. The familiar structure creates a sense of comfort that helps balance the stressors in the story, making them more tolerable. Once readers sense the novels formulaic nature, they can also distance themselves from the story, knowing it to be fiction. On the other hand, the comfort can be antipodal to the stressors, creating paradox and a sense of disquiet. Like gallows humor, formulae provide emotional counterpoint to the problems in the novel, essentially asking the reader to relax into the familiar: "You know how this will end, so why worry?" This juxtaposition of comfort and anxiety recapitulates the "antithetical impulses" of adolescence, resulting in the feeling that readers feel they *should* be comfortable when, in fact, they feel the tension of these oppositional forces.

Three Exemplars

One of the early novels given the moniker of problem novel, and a book that helped define the subgenre, was *Go Ask Alice*. Published in 1971 by an anonymous author, this book is the diary of a young woman who is overwhelmed by the problems in her life. The story begins with a litany of her troubles: "the whole world is cold and gray and unfeeling and my mother is nagging me to clean up my room . . . school was a nightmare . . . how is it possible for me to be so miserable and embarrassed and humiliated and beaten . . . even my parents treat me like I'm stupid and inferior and ever short. I guess I'll never measure up to anyone's expectations. I surely don't measure up to what I'd like to be."³⁰ Over the course of the novel, she tries a variety of drugs and loves the experience of most of them. Her habit leads her to sell drugs to other students and to exchange sex for drugs as well. She is indiscriminately

New Problem Novels

- Kevin Brooks, *Candy*. (New York: Scholastic, 2005).
 Jake Coburn, *Prep School*. (New York: Dutton, 2003).
 Alex Flinn, *Fade to Black*. (New York: Harper Tempest, 2005).
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 Ellen Hopkins, *Impulse*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).
 Catherine Ryan Hyde, *The Year of My Miraculous Reappearance*. (New York: Knopf, 2007).
 Levithan, David (ed.), *This is PUSH: New Stories from the Edge*. (New York: PUSH/Scholastic, 2007).
 Suzanne Phillips, *Chloe Doe*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2007).
 Adam Rapp, *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick, 2004).
 Paul Volponi, *Black and White*. (New York: Viking, 2005).

sexually active (always while high), and her first real crush turns out to be gay. She runs away from home twice, only to find life away from home is worse, and she drops out of school each time. She has eating and dieting issues and suicidal thoughts. Both of her grandparents die, she is bullied and ostracized by her druggie friends, and she eventually ends up in a mental institution. When she is finally released, she determines to "go straight" (as she does each time her life turns desperate), and the book ends with her appearing to do well. The epilogue, however, claims that "the subject of this book died three weeks after her decision not to keep another diary."³¹

The diary entries vacillate between extreme negativity and extreme joy. One moment she claims to be having "fun, fun, fun," and the next is the "worst night of my shitty, rotten, stinky, dreary, fucked-up

life.”³¹ The diary format forces the plot into short glimpses of her life, giving the reader the impression of a strobe light that illuminates moments and creates a jerky and awkward rhythm. The language is that of the street, coarse and brutal (“Another day, another blow job. The fuzz has clamped down until the town is mother dry. If I don’t give Big Ass a blow he’ll cut off my supply. . . . The dirty ofay who wants me to lay it on him knows my ass is dragging, but he’s doling out the only supply I know about.”), and its rhythm, too, is frenetic and insistent. Finally, this book is written in first person, which increases the identification of the reader with the main character.

Too Soon for Jeff is an early entry in the True-to-Life Series from Hamilton High, written by Marilyn Reynolds. High school senior Jeff learns that his girlfriend Christina is pregnant just as he is planning to break up with her. He knows he is not ready for the responsibility, but Christina is unwilling to consider abortion or adoption as alternatives. They break up, spend time apart, and eventually Jeff comes to realize that he must step up to the responsibilities of parenthood.

This title, like the others in the series, is written with a clear purpose and follows a predictable formula in the mold of the traditional problem novel. From the opening sentences of the first chapter of the book, the tone is clearly established: “My name is Jeff Browning. I’m seventeen years old, and I’ve got problems.”³³

In addition to the unplanned pregnancy, various other issues arise. Jeff is the child of a single-parent family; Christina comes from a strict, religious, Mexican American family and her father is verbally abusive; Jeff’s good friend Byron has started running with the wrong crowd; and Jeff’s aunt has passed away from cancer. Jeff’s relationship with his mother is adversely affected by her disappointment in him over the pregnancy, then compounded when he is caught drinking with friends in a public park.

The sentences are short, the sentence structure is unsophisticated, and the vocabulary is ordinary. The voice is first-person present tense, which should establish a sense of immediacy; instead, the prose feels trite and melodramatic, creating an inauthentic teenage voice.

The author’s choice of language is mild by today’s standards (“butthole,” “real witch”) but she does occasionally throw in a real expletive. The most shocking language comes during a racially motivated confrontation at Disneyland on Senior Night.

Stephen Chbosky’s *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is another, more recent, example of the problem novel. As David Spitz mentions in an article in *Time Magazine*, the main character, “Charlie has issues. His favorite aunt passed away, and his best friend just committed suicide. The girl he loves wants him as a friend; a girl he does not love wants him as a lover. His eighteen-year-old sister is pregnant. The LSD he took is not sitting well. And he has a math quiz looming.”³⁴ Other issues in this reality show problem novel include being teased at school, starting to chain smoke in response to stress (which evolves into pot smoking), several sexual encounters for the main character and others he witnesses, and sexual abuse by his favorite aunt that is only revealed in the last three pages of the novel and (somewhat) resolved—though never truly explored—in its epilogue. The reader is left feeling manipulated by this cursory treatment of such a profound issue, though Charlie himself only remembers the experience at the story’s end.

The story is written as a series of letters to an unknown recipient, putting it into first-person perspective. The style is of spoken language, making the sentences fairly short and the language uncomplicated. One interesting technique that adds to the reader’s feeling of angst is the author’s ending descriptions with jarring non sequiturs. For example, when Charlie is philosophizing after some heavy petting

with Mary Elizabeth, he thinks, “All I could do was lie there and think about how much her voice changed when she asked me if she was pretty, and how much she changes when I answered, and how Sam said she didn’t like things like that, and how much my arm was beginning to hurt.”³⁵

While the language of this book is not nearly as raw as that of *Go Ask Alice*, it is incredibly self-revelatory (i.e., Charlie mentions his erection after performing *Rocky Horror Picture Show*), though adolescents who are growing up with the unrelenting exploitation of others’ misfortunes in today’s tell-all TV talk shows may not find this disturbing. While the information is accurate, is it necessary?

These books manifest the combination of an issue-driven, somewhat formulaic plot, the superficial treatment of a number of taboo topics, ordinary language, and a neatly (but not too neatly) resolved ending that readers expect from a typical problem novel, and they all leave readers feeling the edginess and emotional chaos of adolescence, though the emphasis on each of these authorial techniques varies.

The New Problem Novel?

In recent years, contemporary realistic fiction for adolescents has matured as a genre, and some of the characteristics of problem novels from the ’70s and ’80s are changing. There are still, and probably always will be, formulaic and problem-overdosed novels for this age, but in the last ten to fifteen years there has been an improvement in the quality of the writing. The use of expletives seems to be decreasing, perhaps because readers are inured to them and have outgrown their shock value or because they are no longer taboo words. There are more authors of recognized literary merit who are writing in this genre, and reviewers seem less likely to dismiss these books as trite or vapid (some

even receive starred reviews). Many critics use problem novel (or bleak books) synonymously with contemporary realistic fiction, without the derogatory overtones. It may be time, then, to drop the subgenre of problem novels and its negative connotations, and simply refer to all of these books as contemporary realistic fiction. If, as Alleen Nilsen suggests, our new global perspective forces us to encounter myriad problems of which we would previously have been unaware, it is possible that these novels are no longer excessive; they may, indeed, be realistic!

For example, the novel *Impulse* by Ellen Hopkins follows the lives of three teen characters from different backgrounds who are all institutionalized following attempted suicides.³⁶ Connor is recovering from a self-inflicted gunshot wound after his sexual relationship with his English teacher has ended. He is attractive and popular, and comes from a wealthy but uncaring family. Tony is a street-smart gay boy who overdosed on pills and alcohol. He has endured growing up with a prostitute mother, a father who abandoned the family, and time spent homeless on the streets turning tricks to get by. Vanessa is the undiagnosed bipolar teen who cuts herself for emotional release with a schizophrenic mom in a coma and a military father serving time in Afghanistan. The three teens meet over therapy sessions and cafeteria meals and come to care about each other in ways that affect their own emotional development.

The first-person narration alternates perspectives between the three teens, gradually revealing additional problems in each of the characters' lives. The reader eventually learns that Vanessa feels guilt for not reporting her mother's overdose, that Tony has served time in a juvenile detention facility in the past for killing one of his mother's abusive boyfriends, and that Connor's issues with older women, including his mother, are partially influenced by the fact that he himself was molested by his governess when he was very young. Though the perspective

shifts, the first-person connection to each of the characters is intimate, sharing deeply held secrets and painful memories.

The novel is written in free verse, with short stanzas and formatting changes between chapters. This poetic structure is sparse, and allows the author to parcel out additional information slowly and with maximum effect. The formatting of the stanzas varies (indentations and justifications) as does the formatting of the text itself (italics and font changes), further throwing the reader out of a dependable reading cadence. This leads to a feeling of uncertainty, not only about the events that are unfolding, but about how the next page will present itself for reading. In addition, the contrast between the physical heft of the novel (more than 650 pages) and the brevity of the words (50–100 words on most pages) creates another contradiction and layer of ambiguity about what the reader expects to happen.

The number of issues that are addressed in this one novel, when tallied, are both numerous and highly improbable. However, perhaps because of the structure or the unfamiliar setting of the institution, they do not feel unrealistic to the reader. The author convinces the reader that because there are multiple troubled characters, and their lives have intersected in a time and place where so many other things have gone wrong, perhaps all these multitudes of problems could, in fact, exist simultaneously. For adolescent readers, it is an emotional experience being exposed to this many issues at one time, but it also reassures them that their own lives are not that bad.

Even in the face of these unrelenting problems, and serious depression facing each of the characters, they find humor in their situations—a dark humor that helps them cope. It momentarily lightens the load that the characters, and the reader, are carrying, but doesn't offer false hope that the problems are going to go away. In fact it seems to underscore that more darkness is

just around the corner.

The language of the novel is basically simple and straightforward, but strong and explicit at the same time, with recurring references to sexuality that are open and unapologetic. The free-verse format endows the language with a lyrical quality and a veneer of sophistication, especially to a less experienced teen reader. The inclusion of some coarse language, including expletives, when referring to particular events and situations contributes to a sense of hard-hitting reality, even as the situations may be unrealistic when fully examined.

Hopkins' novel culminates in a climactic scene where the main characters are tested on an outdoor survival and camping trip, to prove that they are ready to return to their "regular" lives. While two of the three characters are on an upward trajectory, having found solace in their developing relationship and the therapy and medications they have received, one of the teens spirals downward and succeeds in a secondary suicide attempt, jumping off a mountain the group has just climbed. It is a shocking moment, but not entirely unexpected to the reader, as the dark tone of the book has prepared the reader for it. Ultimately, it is also a hopeful ending, allowing the reader to take comfort that at least two of the characters will survive.

Conclusion

We suggest that problem novels act in two principle ways that serve to foster an emotional reaction in the reader that is akin to the angst common to adolescents: the story (on which most research focuses) and the structure (as proposed here).

These books work for adolescents precisely because they are emotional "coals to Newcastle"; they mirror the feelings that adolescents struggle with every day. Problem novels work for adults because they serve as windows into the anxiety of

adolescence, thereby catapulting adults back into the emotional space many occupied as young adults. We believe it is this emotional connection between the reader and the book that forms the basis for the enduring success of problem novels. **YALS**

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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 www.ala.org/yalsa and click on "Publications."

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the YALSA update

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Find the latest YALSA news every Thursday at the YALSA Blog, <http://yalsa.ala.org/blog>.

Join YALSA at the 2009 ALA Annual Conference!

Early Bird Registration Ends March 6

YALSA has big plans for the 2009 ALA Annual Conference—join us in Chicago on July 9–15!

YALSA will offer two preconferences on July 9: Details are available at <http://tinyurl.com/YALSAannual>.

- **Genre Galaxy: Explore the Universe of Teen Reading.** Lunch included. This full-day preconference runs from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and costs \$195 for YALSA members and student/retired members; \$235 for ALA members; and \$285 for nonmembers.
- **Moving Up the Career Ladder.** This half-day preconference costs \$129 and runs from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

YALSA will also host three special events: the Edwards Award luncheon, the Printz Awards reception, and the Morris Award Presentation/YA Authors Coffee Klatch featuring honorees from YALSA's Quick Picks and Popular Paperbacks list, as well as a speech from the winner of the new Morris Award.

In addition, YALSA offers plenty of interesting programs (see the full list at <http://tinyurl.com/YALSAannual>). Be sure to arrive in time on Friday for YALSA's popular YALSA 101 and to attend the YALSA Happy Hour and Fashion Show on Friday night sponsored by Hyperion Books for Children.

Early bird registration ends March 6.

Find more details about registration and housing at the Annual Conference website, www.ala.org/annual. For the latest details on YALSA's Annual Conference schedule, visit the YALSA Annual Conference Wiki, <http://tinyurl.com/YALSAannual>.

2009 ALA/YALSA Elections

YALSA's Nominating Committee has submitted the following slate for 2009. According to YALSA's bylaws, the Committee will obtain at least two candidates for Vice President/President-Elect, two candidates for councilor, six candidates for Board Members, at least six candidates for the Edwards Committee, and at least eight candidates for the Printz Committee. Elections will be held March 17 to April 24, 2009. The 2009 election will take place entirely online. Details on the 2009 election can be found at www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/governance/alaelection/index.cfm.

YALSA 2009 Slate

Vice President/President-Elect:

Jerene Battisti, Kim Patton

Board Member:

Kelly Czarnecki, Dora Ho, Sara Ryan, Stephanie Squicciarini

Councilor:

Nick Buron, Elizabeth K. Shuping

2011 Edwards Committee:

Amy Alessio, Robin Brenner, Christine

Jenkins, Betsy Levine, Hollis Rudiger, Caryn Sipos

2011 Printz Committee:

Joni Bodart, Jan Chapman, Erin Downey Howerton, Jan Sarratt, Brenna Shanks, Eva Volin, Jamie Watson, Melissa Rabey

2011 Nonfiction Committee:

Christine Allen, Carrie Bryniak, Barb Conkin, Monique Franklin, Jeanette Larson, Don Latham, Mary Long, Charli Osborne

Help Make YALSA Work

YALSA needs your help—share your expertise and better the association by joining one of our process committees. President-Elect Linda Braun will be appointing committee members to the several committees that do the work of our association. Interested in being more involved? Read on to find out how.

A Guide to Process Committees

YALSA has two types of committees: selection committees, which select specific library materials or choose YALSA's awards, and process committees, which help carry out the work of the association. Process committees include

- those that plan YALSA events, including initiatives and conferences, such as Teen Tech Week, Program Clearinghouse, and Local

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Closing General Session Speaker

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- Arrangements; those that help YALSA govern itself, such as Organizations and Bylaws, Strategic Planning, or Nominating;
- those that spread YALSA's messages, including Publications, Web Advisory, and Division and Membership Promotions; and
- many more.

What to Know Before You Volunteer

Before you volunteer to serve on a committee, you'll want to learn what the committee does and what your responsibilities will be. You should contact the chair directly, explain that you're interested in serving, and then ask questions about what your involvement will entail. Names and contact information for all the committee chairs are available by clicking on the "Governance" link on YALSA's homepage. Be sure to attend the All Committee Meeting on Saturday during Midwinter Meeting or Annual Conference to meet with the committee chair and members. You'll have a chance to learn more about the committee and establish an important contact with the committee chair, who helps fill seats as they become vacant.

On the Governance section of YALSA website you'll also find information about each of the committees' functions, size, and more. Lastly, be sure to read through YALSA's Handbook, especially the sections that list responsibilities for committee members. Go to www.ala.org/yalsa and click on "Handbook" in the left menu.

Complete the Committee Volunteer Form

To be considered for any committee, you'll need to fill out a committee volunteer form. It is available online at www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/boardandcommittees/boardcommittees.cfm. When you fill out a form, please be sure to include the name of the committees on which you'd like to serve. If you don't indicate a few that you're interested in, it is very difficult for the president-elect to find the best fit for you. If you already submitted volunteer forms for a committee, but either weren't appointed or missed the deadline for appointments

for your particular committee request, your forms will be turned over to the next president-elect. 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.

The Fine Print

Appointments are for either one- or two-year terms, depending on the committee. Committee members are expected to attend committee meetings at both Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. The exception is for virtual committee members. According to ALA policy, up to one-third of a committee may be made of virtual members. YALSA does not pay travel expenses for committee members. Some committees are very popular and may receive dozens of volunteer forms for just two or three available spots. You might also want to volunteer for a task force. Unlike standing committees, task forces are established from time to time to complete a specific assignment. Terms on task forces end when the YALSA board considers the assignment completed.

Looking to Fund a Trip to Annual Conference?

Do you want to come to Annual Conference, but are worried about the expense? YALSA has a few tips to help you make Chicago more affordable for you.

1. Find out if your library or school has professional development or travel funds that you may be eligible for. Learn how the funds are dispensed (e.g., first come first serve, through an application process, etc.). Be sure to meet deadlines and fill out all paperwork completely.
2. Research which organizations offer professional development scholarships that may help defray your conference costs. Be sure to check with your state or regional library association. Sometimes other organizations may also be willing to support your professional development, such as the PTA or PTO. (YALSA has a conference grant, and the deadline to

apply is December 1 each year. Go to www.ala.org/yalsa and click on "Awards & Grants" to learn more.)

3. Make a case to your supervisor as to how you, your library, and your patrons will benefit from your attendance. Here are some points to cover: (1) Discuss the opportunity you will have to visit the exhibit floor and see the latest print and audiovisual materials and newest emerging technologies. Knowledge of these resources enhances your ability to serve library patrons. (2) Identify which conference programs will help you meet your professional development goals at work and help further the library's mission. Check the March issue of *American Libraries* for a complete list of preliminary programs being offered. YALSA lists its complete slate of events and programs at <http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa> (click on "Upcoming Conferences"). The final list of all ALA programs will be available in May at www.ala.org/annual. Offer to share what you learned at the conference with your coworkers through a presentation at a staff meeting or other means when you return. (3) Point out the fact that most exhibitors offer special discounts for conference goers. Also, many exhibitors steeply discount or even give away books on the last day the exhibit hall is open. This is a way to enhance your collection on a tight budget.
4. Think about ways you can limit expenses: (1) Register for the conference as early as you can to get the best rate. For Annual Conference, the best rates are always when registration first opens in January. For 2009, Early Bird Registration ends March 6 and Advance Registration ends May 22. (2) Become an ALA member to get discounted rates. (3) Reduce hotel costs by sharing a room or explore inexpensive options such as housing on university campuses. (4) Seek out airfare sales, or car pool, if practical.
5. Plan ahead. The ALA website posts its meeting dates at www.ala.org/annual.

6. If you have any questions about YALSA at ALA conferences or meetings, please don't hesitate to contact us at yalisa@ala.org.

Mark Your Calendars

Press Play @ your library® for Teen Tech Week™

Make sure to register for Teen Tech Week! Registration for the third annual event closes on February 8. This year's theme is Press Play @ your library. The general theme for Teen Tech Week is Get Connected. Teen Tech Week 2009 will be celebrated March 8–14.

YALSA is a nonprofit organization that depends on its members for support. By registering, you are letting us know that technology literacy is important to you and your teen patrons; you are telling YALSA that this program is valuable and worth continuing.

Support Teen Literature Day

Love YA literature? Tell everyone that YA lit matters on Support Teen Literature Day on April 16, celebrated in conjunction with ALA's National Library Week (April 12–18, 2009).

Support Teen Literature Day aims to raise awareness among the general public that young adult literature is a vibrant, growing genre with much to offer today's teens. Support Teen Literature Day also seeks to showcase some award-winning authors and books in the genre as well as highlight librarians' expertise in connecting teens with books and other reading materials. Many of these activities can be featured throughout National Library Week or simply featured on Support Teen Literature Day.

Support Teen Literature Day will also be the official launch of YALSA's 2009 Teen Read Week initiative, which will be celebrated October 18–24, 2009, with the theme "Read Beyond Reality @ your library."

YALSA will again participate in Operation TBD on Support Teen Literature Day, along with the readergirlz (www.readergirlz.com). In 2008, YALSA and the readergirlz celebrated Support Teen

Literature Day with this new project. Twenty publishers donated ten thousand books, which YALSA will distribute to twelve children's hospitals nationwide and in Canada so recuperating teens will have something great to read during their hospital stay. Library workers are encouraged to take part in their own communities.

YALSA has compiled a list of activities, display ideas, and contests to help librarians and Teen Advisory Groups celebrate Support Teen Literature Day—learn more by visiting the Support Teen Literature Day webpage at http://wikis.ala.org/yalisa/index.php/Support_Teen_Literature_Day.

YALSA Celebrates at First Young Adult Literature Symposium

More than six hundred librarians, educators, and authors came to the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, November 7–9 to celebrate teen reading at YALSA's first Young Adult Literature Symposium. The 2008 theme was How We Read Now, and it encompassed the many ways in which reading has changed. The Young Adult Literature Symposium is funded in part by the William C. Morris Endowment.

"Our attendees were really able to immerse themselves and devote three days to teen reading. Our strong turnout shows that, for librarians, reading is still what matters most, no matter how it's done," said YALSA President Sarah Cornish Deb-raski. "I came back fired up about engaging teens in reading, and I'm sure others are feeling the same way."

Attendees learned about manga and graphic novels during a symposium pre-conference and enjoyed breakout sessions on Saturday and Sunday on topics ranging from nonfiction for young adults to censorship to the evolution of reading from a solitary pursuit to a dynamic activity in many forms. There were more than twenty-five popular young adult authors on hand to sign and talk about their work at both the ticketed genre luncheon and at social events open to all attendees, and many attendees came home with piles of free books. In addition, YALSA raised funds

to sponsor a Spectrum Scholar in the next round of the program and conducted a scavenger hunt for students attending the symposium.

On Sunday, keynote speakers Kevin J. Anderson and Rebecca Moesta discussed their experiences as writers and the importance of young adult literature during the closing session.

Sponsors for the 2008 Young Adult Literature Symposium were the American Civil Liberties Union; Capstone Publishers; HarperCollins; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Children's Book Group; Little, Brown Books for Young Readers/Yen Press; Pop Goes the Library; and Scholastic.

YALSA announced that the next Young Adult Literature Symposium will take place November 5–7, 2010 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Eclipse Tops YALSA's 2008 Teens' Top Ten

More than eight thousand teen readers across the country chose *Eclipse* by Stephenie Meyer as their favorite book in the annual Teens' Top Ten (TTT) vote. The online vote took place during Teen Read Week, Oct. 12–18, with the third entry in Meyer's popular vampire romance series winning easily.

Here is the 2008 TTT list:

1. *Eclipse*, Stephenie Meyer, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers/Hachette Book Group USA.
2. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, J. K. Rowling, Scholastic,
3. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Jeff Kinney, Abrams Books for Young Readers.
4. *Vampire Academy*, Richelle Mead, Razorbill.
5. *Maximum Ride: Saving the World and Other Extreme Sports*, James Patterson, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers/Hachette Book Group USA.
6. *City of Bones*, Cassandra Clare, Margaret K. McElderry.
7. *The Sweet Far Thing*, Libba Bray, Delacorte.
8. *Extras*, Scott Westerfeld, Simon Pulse.
9. *Before I Die*, Jenny Downham, Random House/David Fickling.

10. *Twisted*, Laurie Halse Anderson, Viking Juvenile.

TTT is a "teen choice" booklist, put together as part of YALSA's YA Galley project, which facilitates access to advance copies of YA books to national teen book discussion groups. These groups evaluated books published between January 2007 and April 2008 and then created a list of twenty-six nominations. Teen voters across the country then cast ballots for their three favorites, creating the 2008 TTT. Final nominations for the 2009 TTT vote will be posted during National Library Week 2009 at www.ala.org/teenstopten.

To learn more about the teen book groups and participating in the YA Galley project, visit www.ala.org/teenstopten. Publishers interested in participating in the program may contact Nichole Gilbert (ngilbert@ala.org) for more information.

YALSA Names First Spectrum Scholar, Two 2009 Emerging Leaders

As part of its commitment to furthering YA librarianship, YALSA chose its first Spectrum Scholar as well as two Emerging Leaders for 2009. Jamie Young is YALSA's Spectrum Scholar, and Carla Land and Katherine Voss are the division's Emerging Leaders.

"The best way to further the profession is to sponsor opportunities for growth

like both of these programs," YALSA President Sarah Cornish Debraski said. "The more well-trained young adult librarians and advocates there are, the better off teens are! YALSA is delighted to offer these opportunities to Jamie, Carla, and Katherine."

YALSA's Spectrum Scholar, Jamie Young, is pursuing a master's degree in library and information science at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She hopes to work with young adults at a public library after she graduates in 2011. YALSA is able to support a Spectrum Scholar for the first time as part of its 2008 diversity campaign.

"This is an invaluable opportunity for me," Young said. "There is so much uncertainty in the lives of young adults. I feel like libraries have the ability to help address some of these issues, and when I go to work full time, I'd like to create an atmosphere and programming that welcome young adults to hang out and feel like they belong to a community. It's awesome to have an organization believe in me and my goals."

YALSA's Emerging Leaders are Carla Land and Katherine Voss. Land is the Children's Services Department Head at the Summerlin Library of the Las Vegas-Clark County (Nev.) Public Library. Voss is a department chair and teacher librarian at the Mary Institute and St. Louis (Mo.) Country Day School.

"Teens are underserved and often brushed aside by both adult and children's services staff, and I hope that my involvement with the Emerging Leaders program

will provide an opportunity for others to see just how necessary it is to keep teens a priority in libraries," Land said.

Voss is equally motivated, "As a school librarian, I am always looking for ways to make the library relevant to students' academic and social lives," Voss said. "I am interested in finding ways to market the library more effectively and promote what librarians really do in the lives of youth: provide access to all kinds of information, teach information literacy skills, and develop lifelong learners and readers."

Established in 1997, the Spectrum Scholarship Program is ALA's national diversity and recruitment effort designed to address the specific issue of underrepresentation of critically needed ethnic librarians within the profession, while serving as a model for ways to bring attention to larger diversity issues in the future.

The Emerging Leaders program enables newer librarians from across the country to participate in workgroups, network with peers, gain an inside look into ALA's structure and have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity. Emerging Leaders receive up to \$1,000 each to participate in the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, and each participant is expected to provide two years of service to ALA or one of its units. More than one hundred librarians will get on the fast track to leadership in ALA and the profession through the 2009 program.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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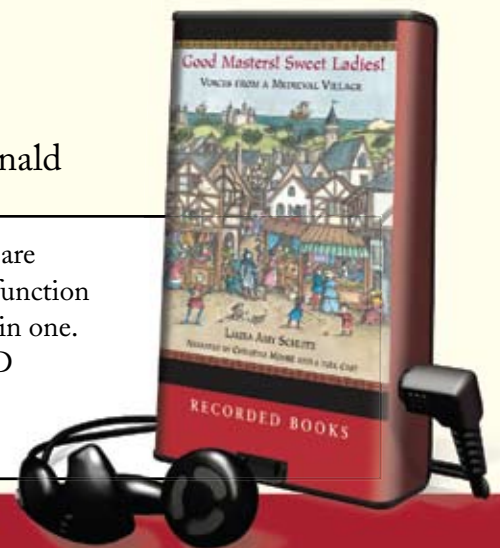
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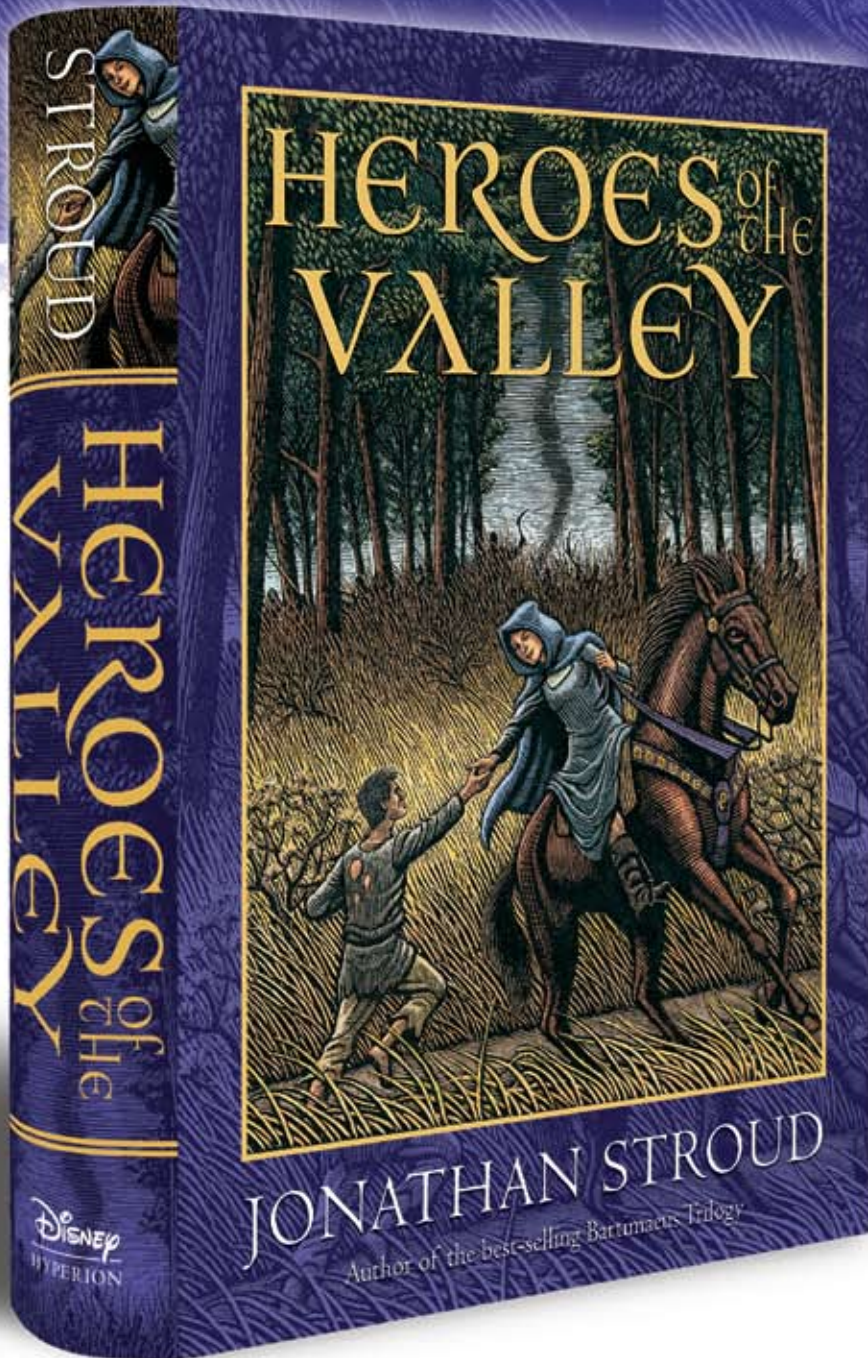


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