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About This Cover

Turn Dreams into Reality @ your library® is the official theme for Teen Read Week™ 2014, October 12–18. Teen Read Week offers libraries a chance to highlight the many ways they connect teens to great reads. Posters and other Teen Read Week products are available at http://bit.ly/teenrdwk2014 or by calling 1-800-746-7252. All proceeds support the nonprofit work of ALA and YALSA.
from the Editor

Linda W. Braun

Each year YALSA sponsors a perfect pair of events: ‘Teen Tech Week™’ and ‘Teen Read Week.’ Each celebrates key aspects of teen lives: technology and reading. And, each complements the other as reading for teens is often technology-based, and the technology that teens use every day often has a reading component. October 12-18 is this year’s Teen Read Week, and you will probably find lots of opportunities to make your own perfect pairings as you celebrate the week with teens.

Maybe you are going to work with teens on creating a reading meme by having them take photos of their favorite reading spots and post those with captions on Tumblr. Or, maybe you plan to have a day-long Tweeting marathon at which teens ‘Tweet’ their favorite quotes from their favorite books. You might even create a Pinterest board on which teens post their favorite book covers and use the comments features so they can discuss each of the books displayed. Or, maybe you are working with a technology organization in your community on a program for teens at which they learn how to create a reading related app. All of these are examples of perfect pairings.

In this issue of YALS there are articles that give you ideas of more ways to create perfect pairs. You’ll learn about the ‘I Matter’ program at which teens in Northport, New York, were able to create a Kickstarter project so they could print posters that showed why each of them mattered. You will read about the Teen Reading Lounge, which brings teens together to talk about popular young adult books and gives them the opportunity to take part in activities that encourage innovation, collaboration, communication, and creative problem solving. What if someone said to you, “Let’s have a program that pairs teens and soldering?” You might say, “No way.” Well, don’t be so quick with that response because you’ll learn in this issue how Candice Mack and a teen in Los Angeles worked together to do just that—pair teens and soldering at the public library. In a lot of ways, connected learning is all about perfect pairs—pairing teens with their passions and interests. Learn more about that in this issue in an interview with teen librarian Kristy Gale.

Look around you. Do you see ways that you can create perfect pairs for teens as you work with them to provide great service? What perfect pairs can you create for Teen Read Week? This issue of YALS will help you to figure that out.
I work for Kitsap Regional Library, a semi-rural library system just across the Puget Sound from Seattle. If you’ll indulge me, I’d like to share some scenarios with you that would commonly occur during a typical work week with members of my Youth Services Team. Whitney, at the Little Boston Branch on the Port Gamble S’Klallam Indian Reservation, helps students during high school career night at the tribal center. Bradley hosts a discussion group for GLBT teens and their allies that brings in participants from all over our expansive service area as well as the next county over. Greta does a reader’s advisory session at Washington Youth Academy, a military school that serves diverse teens from all over the state. Stefanie, a Teens Top Ten book review coordinator, sends titles to the juvenile detention center. Seth and Grant visit alternative schools and work with homeless teens to complete a technology training and career skill building initiative. Lynn works to connect with a quickly growing Spanish-speaking community in Poulsbo. What’s the link that ties all of these efforts together? Lack of relevant resources. Not money, time, or staffing (though, of course, those are all stretched, too), but enough titles (physical print and digital) to appeal to and reflect the experience of the teens we serve.

I tell you these stories because I know that though the details will vary, the experience of my system’s struggle to create deep diverse teen collections, has long been and continues to happen all over the country. According to analysis of the 2010 census by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 46 percent of the nation’s 74.2 million youth under the age of 18 are non-white.1 That’s over 34,000,000 kids and teens of color. Juxtapose that 34 million with data from the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, which shows that less than 8 percent of the 3200 books that they received by the Center in 2013 (or 253 titles) were “about” youth of color (not to mention the topic of authenticity and quality of those titles which could be another column altogether).2

As I write this column, the #WeNeedDiverseBooks campaign is in full swing. Whether the limelight will fade or the call will continue is yet to be determined, but one thing is certain—the collective action that has gained momentum to address this urgent issue matters. In order for real change to occur, YALSA members, authors, families, and teens need to work together often, and be loud about it, to continue to keep this need at the forefront. According to one participant of the Future of Teens and Libraries Summit, as cited in YALSA’s “The Future of Libraries for and with Teens: A Call to Action” report, “Libraries used to be grocery stores. Now we need to be kitchens.”3 Let’s work together to ensure that we have the right reading material ingredients to cook with.

References
Getting the Most from Teen Tech Week: Lessons from the TTW Survey

By Denise E. Agosto, Natalie Couch, Adam Mendelsohn, Melanie Metzger, Gina Seymour, and Gail Tobin

YALSA’s Teen Tech Week Evaluation Task Force works to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of YALSA’s Teen Tech Week (TTW) and to make recommendations for improving the initiative. The 2013 TTW Task Force surveyed YALSA members and others who hosted 2013’s TTW in an effort to learn about the kinds of programs libraries featured during TTW and to consider how well the initiative is meeting its goals. We present the results of the survey here and compare them to the results of the 2008 TTW evaluation survey, when comparable data are available. We also offer suggestions for making TTW in your own library a more successful, educational, and enjoyable experience for teens in your community.

The Survey
YALSA’s 2013 Teen Tech Week took place from March 10–16. The theme for the week was Check In @ your library®! Libraries hosting TTWs were encouraged to “throw open their physical and virtual doors to teens and showcase the outstanding technology they offer, from services such as online homework help and digital literacy-focused programs to resources like e-books, movies, music, audiobooks, databases, and more.”

May 2013, YALSA staff used social media to ask TTW hosts to complete a brief evaluation survey, designed by the TTW Evaluation Task Force, to gather information about their programs.

The survey asked respondents why they chose to participate in TTW, the types of activities and programs they hosted during TTW, TTW budget amounts, the numbers of participating teens, which TTW resources from YALSA they found to be the most useful, and more. A total of 148 librarians and others who hosted TTWs responded to the survey.

Survey Results
Note: A previous TTW Evaluation Task Force conducted a similar survey in 2008. As a result, we were able to compare program offerings, attendance, funding, and more between the two sets of survey results.

The first question on the survey asked respondents why they had participated in Teen Tech Week. Two of the most popular reasons for participating were “to teach teens about library technology” (52.7 percent) and “to help teens use digital resources more successfully” (52 percent). (Percentages total more than 100 percent because respondents selected multiple reasons for participating.) Other reasons included showing “the community the tech services and resources provided to teens” (39.2 percent) and “to learn more about teen technology use and needs” (29.7 percent). While TTW’s main focus is on getting teens to “be competent and ethical users of digital media,” the majority of respondents simply wanted teens in their libraries utilizing all and any library materials and services, whether they were tech related or not. Of those surveyed, 78.4 percent indicated that one reason they participated in TTW was to bring more teens into the library.
There were several other reasons given for participating, most of which aligned with the need to support teen technology skills, but there was one other recurring theme worth mentioning. Several libraries participated simply because the event is fun for teens. This demonstrates that libraries and other organizations that participated in TTW see not just the educational value of TTW but also its entertainment value. If teens are having fun in the library with technology, they are certainly forming an intrinsic desire to learn. For example, one librarian explained that their TTW digital photo-editing workshop taught teens "how easy it is to Photoshop a picture and place it on the Internet. I think I was successful in conveying the point that not everything they see on the web is real. Even things that appear to be real could have been edited."

Program participants likely had fun playing with images and distorting them, while also learning critical media literacy skills and becoming motivated to continue exploring digital photography editing on their own after the program ended.

As another example of the link between the educational and entertainment value of TTW activities, several libraries held retro-tech programs. Teens found these programs to be fun while learning how intrinsic modern technology is to their lives. As one respondent wrote: "Students loved the retro tech week. They got to play records on the record player and tapes in the boom box, type on the typewriter, and manipulate glass and Kodachrome slides on the slide sorter. Students became more aware and appreciative of modern technology (word processing and computers). And we ended up getting some photo PR in the local paper. Word of mouth was the most powerful tool for success."

Table 1, above, lists the major reasons given as to why survey respondents participated in TTW.

Next, we asked respondents to tell us the types of activities they conducted for TTW. In 2013 we saw double the types of programming conducted for TTW than in 2008. See Tables 2 and 3, below, for the most common categories of TTW programs offered in 2008 and 2013.

Most notably in 2013 we saw the introduction of more hands-on types of programming including coding and hacking, maker and DIY projects, and app development workshops. Several libraries also took the opportunity to tie in more traditional library services such as digital literacy skills training and library card sign-ups.

Under the heading of "Other" types of programming in 2013, we saw a wide range of fun and innovative programming. Some of the offerings included robotics demonstrations, a Hollywood digital sound effects guest speaker, geocaching, a technology petting zoo, digital photography and photo editing, QR code scavenger hunts, retro technology and gaming events, and teens making their own library memes. See figure 1, below, for a fuller list of these other programs.

We also asked survey respondents to tell us about their most successful TTW event or activity. Answers were quite varied, from "It [TTW] was not a success at all" to "Getting the teens into the library" to "Getting teens to see that they are capable of doing coding" and "Watching the 6th grader’s reaction when he won an MP3 player."

Several respondents considered the main success of TTW to be positive advertising and public relations for the library. For example, one library held "a digital photography contest and display [ed] these outstanding photos..."
As with any programming, there were some flops, including many programs with low attendance and the occasional snow day ruining the program. However, there were many high points as well: the Hollywood movie sound guy who showed teens how to take a passion (music) and turn it into a hobby or profession; the popular YA authors who visited faraway libraries via Skype or other web video services; the “gasp” from teens realizing that we used to talk to each other on cell phones as big as bricks; and the many after-hours programs where librarians were able to focus just on the teens and provide them with hours of technological fun. In general, the keys to programming success seemed to be trying to offer the teens something that they wouldn’t regularly have access to, and focusing efforts and resources on showing teens that they matter in the library.

It’s important to note that we learned money doesn’t have to be a barrier to successful TTW programming. In both the 2008 and 2013 surveys the majority of libraries indicated that their budgets were under $50. See Table 4, below, for the budget ranges of survey respondents. Many libraries provided low-cost or no-cost programming by teaming up with local organizations who volunteered time and services, or by using free web-based services to conduct their programs (e.g., Facebook, Skype, QR codes).

Keeping in mind YALSA’s emphasis on collaborating with other agencies and individuals, we also asked respondents to tell us which organizations they partnered or collaborated with for TTW efforts. Of those surveyed in 2013, 40.5 percent indicated that they partnered or collaborated with other organizations on their TTW events. The most common partnership was between public libraries and K-12 schools (about 23 percent of
respondents), which comprised almost half of all the partnerships mentioned.
There were several other types of partners that were fairly common organizations for libraries to work with, including youth-focused nonprofits, out of school time programs, YALSA, and Friends of the Library groups.

However, there were other partnerships mentioned in the survey that broke with tradition and seemed to imply youth advocates and libraries are using TTW as a reason to branch out and get innovative with support sources. Several individuals mentioned that they worked with local arts organizations, like museums and educational institutions, and a few even worked with tech for-profit, commercial organizations. Regardless of the type of partnership or collaboration, many libraries seem to have found strength in working together to achieve a shared end goal. The tried and true partnerships also demonstrate that teen advocates do not need to go far for a little help from their “friends.”

For the most part, partnerships and collaborations involved guest program providers, volunteer staff, and other non-monetary donations. Few respondents indicated they received financial support in the form of monetary grants and donations or donated goods and services. Only 23 of the 148 respondents (15.5 percent) indicated that they received any financial support or services from collaborators. Due to the high percentage of those surveyed who said they partnered with schools and libraries or youth organizations, it seems likely that most TTW partnerships were primarily utilized as a way of advertising programs and services. Of those that indicated they did receive financial support, the majority received it in the form of donated goods or services, as opposed to cash donations.

The most common reason given by survey respondents (78.4 percent) for their participation in TTW was to bring more teens into the library. Both the 2008 and 2013 surveys showed that most libraries saw total participation for their TTW programs and activities of between one and 25 teens. This demonstrates that providing tech-related programming does attract a core group of teens to the library. See Table 5, above, for a comparison of teen participation reported in 2008 and 2013.

**Recommendations for Improving TTW**

The official purpose of Teen Tech Week is to ensure that teens are competent and ethical users of digital media, especially nonprint resources offered through libraries, such as e-books, e-readers, databases, audiobooks, and social media. Responses to the 2013 TTW evaluation survey indicate that much of the programming held to promote Teen Tech Week is not supporting this stated goal. For the most part, participating
libraries mainly promoted the event through displays, both in-house (59.5 percent) and online (42.6 percent). While some libraries did offer more hands-on technology programs, only 16.9 percent of responding libraries presented programs on digital literacy skills. More libraries presented gaming tournaments (20.3 percent), tech workshops (27.7 percent), contests or drawings (39.2 percent) or events based in social media (18.9 percent). Although teen participants might have learned digital literacy skills from these types of programs, the emphasis was on entertainment over education.

The vast majority (78.4 percent) of responding TTW hosts participated in order to get more teens into the library, with teaching the teens about technology and helping them use digital resources more successfully as secondary objectives (52.7 percent and 52 percent, respectively). Bringing more teens into the library is an important and worthwhile goal, but in future years TTW hosts should keep in mind technology education goals as well and work to increase their hands-on technology program offerings.

TTW hosts should also consider seeking more financial assistance from potential partners and collaborators. Throughout the survey responses, budget restraints were a repeated theme. As a result of tight programming budgets, most respondents focused on offering low-cost activities with minimal staffing requirements, such as in-library displays and passive programming (59.5 percent) and features on library websites (42.6 percent), with hands-on tech programs comprising only about a quarter of all programs offered (27.7 percent), due in part to budget constraints. Nearly 87 percent of respondents spent less than $100 on TTW, with the majority spending less than $50.

As for TTW resources from YALSA, survey respondents listed several suggestions for improvements. When asked what resources they would like to see for the next year’s event, 56.7 percent stated they would like a Teen Tech Week Manual. (See the sidebar on materials that YALSA provides for Teen Tech Week for information on what is already available.) Although creating a manual would be time-intensive, the Task Force agrees that it would be a helpful resource for TTW hosts, and we hope that one will be created at some future point.

In addition, many of the respondents discussed the need for materials to be posted earlier on TTW sites. This would help with the budgeting and planning process, which takes place earlier in the year at many libraries. A very useful resource featuring many suggested activities and further information is accessible by selecting the Teen Tech Week link on the YALSA webpage. It takes you to http://teentechweek.ning.com. Most of the ideas there can be adapted to TTW celebrations to fit any year’s theme.

Survey respondents also suggested that YALSA host a national contest for teen TTW participants to encourage increased participation. Requests for mini-grants and tips for funding (55.2 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively) were expressed as additional wish-list items. Additionally, about a third of the write-in suggestions concerning TTW resources referenced funds, costs, or budgets. TTW planners were looking for more low-cost or no-cost programming ideas, and free giveaway items such as bookmarks, graphics, and publicity tools, as well as “less expensive” posters from YALSA.

Finally, some respondents would have liked more opportunities for discussing TTW activities online with other TTW hosts after the week had ended. As one respondent wrote, it would be helpful if YALSA would create “a place to share what worked and what didn’t after the program!”

Despite these critiques, the good news is that many of the responding libraries were successful in using TTW to increase library use. About half (55.4 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that more teens accessed their library’s resources and services during the week. Also, even though increased library use was the most popular reason for
hosting TTW’s, educational goals were still important to about half of the survey respondents. Indeed, the second and third most cited goals for hosting TTW’s were to teach teens about library technology (52.7 percent) and to help teens use digital resources more successfully (52.0 percent).

Overall, it seems that the librarians who hosted TTW events had more varied goals for their programs than YALSA’s stated TTW goal of ensuring that teens are competent and ethical digital media users. The TTW Evaluation Task Force considers goals such as increased library use and entertainment opportunities to be equally worthwhile, and we have recommended that YALSA consider broadening the stated goals for the program.

Conclusion

It is clear from the survey responses that those participating in Teen Tech Week are primarily public librarians who sponsor the week in order to get more teens into the library and to expand teen knowledge and understanding of “good” use of technology. However, many of the programs offered were either passive information provision or entertainment programs. Significantly fewer programs focused on hands-on technology education and experimentation, such as technology workshops (27.7 percent) and maker projects (23 percent). The TTW Evaluation Task Force hopes that more participating libraries will be able to offer more hands-on technology programs in future years. If you celebrated TTW in 2014, we hope you’ll take the time to tell the next TTW Evaluation Task Force about your experiences when it’s time for the next evaluation survey, helping other libraries and the teens they serve to get the most out of YALSA’s Teen Tech Week.

YALSA’s Teen Tech Week Materials.

YALSA provides an array of materials to support those participating in Teen Tech Week, including:

- The Teen Tech Week Ning—http://teentechnweek.ning.com/—which includes resources for planning events, publicizing TTW programs, applying for grants and opportunities for discussing TTW ideas.
- A handbook—www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=10810—published each year with ideas for planning and implementing the program in your library.
- The book—Teen Read Week and Teen Tech Week: Tips and Resources for YALSA’s Initiatives at www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=3255—a compilation of YALS articles on how to implement a successful program for Teen Tech Week and Teen Read Week.

Additional Suggestions for Increasing the Impact of TTW in Your Library

Go high tech! To increase the tech education impact of your next (or first!) TTW, consider moving away from passive and simple programs like book displays, scavenger hunts, and QR events to include more active tech-oriented programs. These types of programs could also help you to reach out to teens who have an interest in technology but who do not normally come to the library. If you lack tech knowledge, collaborations and partnerships can make up for it. Often members of high school technology clubs, community college instructors, local tech business employees, and others will be willing to put on free programs geared to their own expertise if you reach out to them and ask.

Plan early! Early planning is necessary for developing meaningful programs. Early planning, ideally several months in advance, is especially important for contacting and securing collaborators and funders.

Take full advantage of YALSA TTW resources! After you register for the program each year, be sure to familiarize yourself with the range of available resources, including the TTW logo, e-blasts, posts on the YALSA blog, the TTW Ning, the events and activity ideas toolkit, the STEM wiki page, and the STEM toolkit.

Get involved on Twitter! A great way to keep up with tech-related stories. You can learn a lot by just reading the links that are shared about teens and technology. If you’re new to Twitter, here are some accounts you might like to follow: YALS editor Linda Braun, TED, TechSoup, Pew Internet, ALA TechSource, Mashable, Hive Learning NYC, DIY, DIY Girls, TechHive, and Codecademy.

Use Pinterest! For even more ideas, Pinterest is a great tool. For example, visit www.pinterest.com/all/diy_crafts/ for low-tech craft ideas, and www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=diy%20tech for high-tech craft ideas.

References

The Teen Services Department at the Northport-East Northport Public Library on Long Island recently hosted a unique community art project featuring local teens called “I Matter.” This town-wide, social impact art campaign empowered teens by providing a public venue for them to be seen and heard. Students photographed one another and wrote phrases explaining why they mattered in the world. The large four-by-four foot photographs were then displayed in the windows of the library for three months, as a reminder to community members of the value of teens as a part of the community. Phrases such as “I speak my mind” and “I’m a shoulder to lean on” were written across the photos, giving the community the opportunity to see teens in a positive light. This project gave adolescents access to tools to use to courageously express themselves (and their thoughts and feelings) through art and conversation. Their creations were inspiring and brought about awareness and positive action.

Why I Matter
“I Matter” is a viral facet of a drug prevention program called “Just Like Me Project,” which is a multilayered, innovative approach to prevention that unites communities in an effort to steer kids clear of destructive decision making, including substance abuse (www.justlikemeproject.org/). Rob Goldman, the founder of this program, is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, and author. Rob is a member of our local community’s Drug and Alcohol Task Force and presented his idea for the “I Matter” project to the library last summer. It is his belief that it is possible to educate, inspire, and motivate teens to make better decisions and to make a positive difference, not only in their own lives, but also in the lives of their friends and families in their community.

As the teen librarians spearheading this project, we needed to recruit between 20 and 30 teens to participate. Initially, we planned to involve only high school students, but as we started recruitment at the end of August, and many families were on vacation, we decided to include middle school students as well. We approached some of the pages who worked at the library and we called teens that had been active in our volunteer programs. Some of the kids brought friends to our initial three-hour meeting in the Community Room of our Northport library building. At this meeting, Rob Goldman explained the premise of the program, and we then paired up the participants for a one-on-one informal interview. The teens moved to quiet areas of the library and were asked a series of personal questions about their beliefs, values, and concept of self-worth. Questions ranged from “If you could be any animal, what would it be?” to “Do you consider yourself a good friend?” While the questions seemed innocent, they compelled the participants to connect on a deeply personal and empathetic level.

After the interviews, the teens were brought to a pop-up photography studio, located on the library’s theater stage. Rob worked with the teens and gave them some basic instruction in photography techniques. Emphasis was placed on having the students feel comfortable and open to expressing their true selves. Each pair of students photographed each other, resulting in a full range of funny, silly, and serious poses. When the photography session ended, Rob and his assistant, Dina Rescott, read through the teens’ answers and selected a quote for each that best represented a unique trait that reflected why they “mattered” and that fit their photo.

How Fundraising Matters
Once the photos were taken, a core group of about seven teens began to meet on a weekly basis to build the next component of this program: a Kickstarter campaign. Kickstarter.com is a way to fund creative projects. With Kickstarter funding, it is all or nothing—projects must meet their funding goal within 28 days to receive any money. Our goal was $6,700 to fund printing of about 30 high-quality posters and for the filming and editing of a promotional video.

The students were guided by Rob Goldman and the teen librarians, but the teen participants were truly at the helm.
of the fundraising process. Those who create a Kickstarter campaign post the
details of their project on the organization’s website. Details can include an overview
of the project along with the amount of money needed and pledge levels and
their associated prizes. (Our campaign information is available at www.kickstarter.com/projects/208339466/i-matter-project-at-northport-public-library.)

The teens used ideas they developed through crowdsourcing to create an
effective fundraising plan that not only
spoke to their family and community members but engaged their fellow
classmates. Lending their own unique youth perspective and voice, they co-wrote
the script for the Kickstarter campaign video and participated in its narration.

After the video was finished, the students met to discuss fundraising.
Because Kickstarter is based on a prize-level system, the teens were asked to come up with different ideas for rewards and attribute different fundraising levels to each. For example, with a pledge of $5.00, the donor’s name appeared on the “I Matter” website, a $50 donation received an “I Matter” wristband, and a $500 donation received a mini “I Matter” photo shoot.

How Marketing Matters
With the prize system sorted out, the last major task was to spread the word. But how? In a world of rapidly changing social media, the team was at a loss as

to how to select the right platform to market their campaign. Our library was new to the Kickstarter platform, and there were concerns that we would not meet our goal within the time limit. After a few weeks of stalled fundraising, the team came back together to drum up new ideas.

The library had promoted the Kickstarter project through our monthly newsletter, website, and Facebook page. We had flyers, countywide e-mail blasts to all library youth directors, and press releases that were sent out to local newspapers. But what the students discovered was that while social media had the potential to reach thousands, what was most impactful to garnering donations was connecting face-to-face with people in their town and school. This was achieved in numerous ways including the teens wearing their “I Matter” t-shirts to school and using a simple color stamp that said “I Matter” that they stamped on their classmates’ arms and hands. It got students and teachers talking about the project and word started to spread. Local news articles also helped get the project information into the community, and the funding came through in the final week. Our Kickstarter campaign raised $7,498, almost $800 more than anticipated. We all breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Showing Teens They Do Matter
A few weeks later, the photos were printed and proudly displayed on

the windows of the library. A public reception was held for the students, families, local government officials, library board of trustees, donors, and community members to celebrate this successful project. The library was the perfect venue for this project. The photographs, with their inspiring images and words, offered a poignant reminder that we all matter.

Although the teen participants displayed great pride in their work throughout the project, this was never more apparent than at the “I Matter” reception. The students were not prepared for the overwhelming response of support and interest they received from the audience of over 100 people. It made them realize that through their dedication and hard work, they had not only been seen and heard but they had also given a voice to those whose lives have been affected by drug and alcohol abuse.

This unique program was designed to get our teens talking to each other and working together to minimize destructive decision making. It was very gratifying to see the teens step up and take ownership of this project. Several of our students are now continuing their work by taking on a leadership role in mentoring teens in nearby libraries with their own “I Matter” projects. We cannot stress enough the importance of handing over the reins to our community teens. It is through their voices and their unique perspective that this project was made possible and successful. YALS
Teen Services and the Humanities—The Perfect Pair

By LeeAnn Anna and Jen Danifo

At a library in a suburban neighborhood outside of Pittsburgh, a group of teens sit in a circle and passionately debate morality, sacrifice, and responsibility in Suzanne Collins’s blockbuster series, The Hunger Games. They’ve been meeting for several weeks, and many of them were new to the library and to each other when the meetings first began. Although boisterous, they take turns talking and listening to one another, and on some points, agree to disagree. Later, they break up into groups to finish their models of the Hunger Games arena, a project they have been working on since the start of the program series. Teens huddle together to discuss the best way to represent their artistic vision, and finish their design. The atmosphere is fun and creative, peppered with laughter and excited exclamations as new ideas are shared.

This is Teen Reading Lounge (TRL), an interactive reading and discussion program, designed by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council (PHC), library staff, educators, literature experts, and artists. The aim of TRL is to bring teens together around popular young adult books to discuss issues important to them and involve them in activities that encourage innovation, collaboration, communication, and creative problem solving.

A Partnership for Success

In fall 2012, PHC pursued a partnership with Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) to bring TRL to eight libraries in Allegheny County. The project was dubbed the Allegheny Project and funded by federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds administered by the Office of the Commonwealth Libraries, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. This partnership was a natural extension for both PHC and CLP and built on two pilot rounds of the program in libraries across the state. CLP, for its part, had recently prioritized teen services with the creation of teen spaces in two neighborhood locations and the hiring of more teen services staff. This project marked the first time PHC was partnering with a teen services provider, and they were interested to learn how TRL achieved the program’s two goals: increase the capacity of libraries to offer humanities programming for teens and engage teen audiences in humanities activities that builds 21st century learning skills. CLP wanted to add another resource to its impressive lineup of programming, and to learn how an interactive book discussion model like TRL might work with teens.

Choosing host libraries was the first step in the process. PHC staff worked with the Teen Services Coordinator from

LEEANN ANNA is the Manager of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) - Lawrenceville. Previously, LeeAnn was the Teen Services Coordinator at CLP, where she led a team of dynamic teen specialists in engaging teens in connected learning experiences throughout libraries in the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Anna has served as the Chair of the Youth Services Division of the Pennsylvania Library Association and the Chair of the Carolyn W. Field Book Award Committee. She received a bachelor’s degree in English Literature and a master’s degree in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh. She started her library career as a page shelving books at CLP’s Main Library.

JEN DANIFO is a Program Officer at the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, where she has been coordinating programs for libraries for close to five years. Danifo presented on Teen Reading Lounge, along with Allegheny teen services staff, at the annual ALA conference in Las Vegas in June 2014.
CLP to find sites that were interested in building their capacity for teen services and offering humanities programming for teens. Eight sites were chosen in Allegheny County: five CLP locations in Pittsburgh (CLP–Allegheny, CLP–Beechview, CLP–Brookline, CLP–Carrick, and CLP–Hazelwood) and three libraries outside of the city (Corapolis Memorial Library, Community Library of Allegheny Valley (Harrison), and North Versailles Public Library). The number one quality PHC measured was motivation to improve services, and interest in the humanities as a way to engage teens. Some libraries within the system had tried book clubs, but didn’t see much success. TRL host libraries were eager to see how the discussion and activity hybrid might be successful, especially if the teens had a say in book choices and in developing activities that reflected their interests.

After libraries were chosen, teen services staff selected local educators to serve as program facilitators. The purpose of this was twofold: local educators had experience facilitating humanities discussions and activities with teens and could model best practices for library staff; in addition, including another individual added another perspective to programming and more support for library staff that already had a lot on its plate. One CLP staffer said, “My facilitator was a great role model for me. Observing her leading the discussions, guiding the group dynamics and learning her planning tips and strategies was helpful to my learning.”

Designing a Meaningful Experience

To market the program, library staff visited their local schools and community centers to drum up interest in the program. Recently, CLP had prioritized outreach initiative, which put library staff in school cafeterias during lunchtime to encourage teens to participate in programs like TRL at their local library. Many program facilitators worked at local schools, too, and advertised the program to their students. The result of this combined outreach effort brought new faces into the library, a bonus for library staff that may not have had much success with community outreach.

Some libraries held kickoff parties for their regulars to introduce the program and asked participants for feedback about the books and activities. These fun, informal brainstorming sessions reinforced the work library staff was already doing to incorporate teens’ interests and views into library activities. Teens felt like a part of the experience from the beginning, and were more likely to return to additional sessions. Other libraries surveyed teens, or relied on teen advisory groups to help them shape programs. Libraries that did not have the teen following in place had to make program decisions up front. For example, library staff chose books based on its overall knowledge of popular YA reads, selecting titles that had wide appeal like The Hunger Games. This helped create excitement around the program and from there the library built a core group that selected additional books and interest-based activities. Regardless of the method, the message was clear: TRL was a program for teens, and their input was essential to its success.

How TRL programs unfolded at each library varied. The framework of TRL is intentionally flexible so that library staff, facilitators, and teens can co-curate the experience. While there may be similarities across libraries in terms of interest-related trends, each community is different.

Early on, PHC learned that giving libraries the power to shape a unique experience for their teens yielded a more successful and meaningful program. We heard loud and clear from advisors and pilot sites that working with teens is not an exact science. Creating successful experiences takes some trial and error, and strategies may need to be adjusted. For teens to truly feel empowered, library staff and facilitators need to incorporate feedback in real time. One library from a pilot round of TRL underscored this point well. As part of their exploration of The Hunger Games trilogy, the young adult librarian and the facilitator planned to incorporate a game based on the books, thinking the teens would love exploring the story in a different way. “It was a complete bomb,” the facilitator told us. “But the librarian and I looked at each other and said, ‘Okay, what next?’ You can’t be afraid of failing in front of the group. It taught us to trust the feedback we were getting from our teens and to always have a backup plan!”

CLP–Hazelwood, a library that participated in the Allegheny project, saw its TRL program blossom into a civic engagement project. Five teens made up the core group and all had been in juvenile detention and had completed community service hours at the library. From the beginning it was clear the reading and discussion format wasn’t fully working because their teens weren’t leisure readers and they weren’t familiar with graphic novels and comics.

“No one had ever read a graphic novel so in the first session we talked about how the panels work,” library staff told us. “We actually read a chapter from the first book together at our first session. It was one of those moments that remind us how important our work is. We ended up having a really intense conversation about equality, a prevalent
Teens participating in TRL showed growth in four skill-sets:

**Interpersonal Skills**
86% said they felt more confident understanding others’ viewpoints. Teens built collaboration skills that allowed them to understand and respect other ideas and points-of-view.

**Communication Skills**
86% said they felt more confident expressing thoughts and ideas to others. Teens learned to effectively communicate using verbal and nonverbal methods in a group and one-on-one.

**Literacy & Media Skills and Critical-thinking Skills**
88% saw new possibilities in reading and learning. Teens read, analyzed and interpreted information in a variety of genres and formats. They made connections between ideas and worked together to creatively address challenges.

“These teens wanted to create a project that would add something beautiful but functional to their neighborhood,” said a program observer. “They made the connection to their favorite work *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan when they commented that in that graphic novel, the man found a new country where he could function and stated that the birds in the community would have a new habitat as well.”

The library embraced challenges and let their teens guide the process by observing how they reacted to discussion and activities. Making adjustments, reading aloud, exploring how comics created a narrative, building a safe, welcoming environment where all voices were heard, and guiding the teens to create something that had real-world implications, yielded a program with great impact that was beyond a book discussion program.

“The project connected the books and beautified our neighborhood,” the teen librarian said. “[The teens were] able to take pride in the lasting effect and hopefully it can shape the idea of taking accountability for their own environment.”

Connecting Interests, Building Skills
The story at CLP–Hazelwood highlights the importance of allowing teens to be an active part of the learning process—a guiding principle of Pittsburgh’s teen services vision. The basis for this approach, the connected learning model, shows that youth are more likely to reach their life and educational goals when they have experiences outside the school environment that are rooted in peer culture, are interest-driven, and connect back to their academic, economic, and civic lives. PHC designed TRL to use humanities activities like book discussion as a way to build on specific life skills that are being developed in the classroom. Because TRL is not classroom-based, teens can explore without the pressure of tests or grading and they have more control over the activities in which they participate.

Research from the Search Institute, which CLP and the Alleghany County Library Association also use to guide their teen services mission, and PHC used to develop program outcomes, further supports that teens need a variety of opportunities and support to develop qualities required to be successful in life. The Search Institute points to interactions that put teens in contact with positive adult role models who are not teachers or parents and connecting them with opportunities that build “personal power” or chances for teens to voice their opinions and offer input. Encouraging teens to use their time constructively in both creative pursuits and interest-focused programs and to read for pleasure can also be crucial to teen development.

The humanities connect us with each other and help us to start conversations that ask us to think critically, engage with our communities, and grow so that we understand the past, explore the present, and discover
possibilities for the future. Because of this, they naturally push teens to ask questions and share ideas, activities that build important 21st century learning skills that are vital as teens begin to discover who they are, who they want to be, and how to relate to other people. The library gives teens the space to explore these questions so they can begin to build confidence and skills that will allow them to succeed in life.

To study how the humanities can aid in skill building and personal development, PHC worked with a program evaluator from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU), an organization that provides specialized educational services to Allegheny County’s education community. AIU oversaw evaluation activities, including the work of eight TRL outside observers selected from the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project from the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Education who attended programs to track outcomes in teen participants. Through these observations, program surveys, informal conversations with teens and adults, AIU tracked and reported on skill development in participating teens. The evaluation showed growth in four skill areas: interpersonal, communication, literacy and media, and critical thinking. 92 percent of teens reported that they would participate in similar programming again and 91 percent would help the library develop new programs. One library staffer said, “The community conversations provided by humanities-based learning can be a springboard into teen service learning projects that can connect teens in meaningful ways with the community. Teens can develop leadership skills to work together on many levels in ways that are insightful and caring.”

**Conclusion**

Over 100 teens from neighborhoods in Pittsburgh participated in the program, many coming from strikingly different backgrounds and circumstances. These teens came back week after week to explore different points of view and better understand themselves and others around them. In the process, they strengthened skills that made them better learners, communicators, and thinkers.

As teen services professionals address the challenges in the field, interactive program models like TRL can offer a way for teens to be an active part in their learning and development. The beauty of learning in the library is the flexibility it allows in activities that are free from judgment and can directly connect to real-world contexts and interests. The partnership between PHC and CLP and ACLA proved that when teen services and the humanities come together with shared goals and a vision for success, libraries can impact teens in surprising and beneficial ways.

**References**

1. Connected Learning resources can be found at http://connectedlearning.tv/what-is-connected-learning.
2. Search Institute resources on Development Assets can be found at www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets.
Teen makerspaces, maker projects, and connected learning projects all sound awesome, but how does one reasonably and successfully implement one? Especially given safety, liability, and bureaucratic concerns? That’s what you’ll read in part 1 of this article. In part 2, you’ll read an interview with Coco Kaleel, a girl who led the soldering workshops for the library.

Part 1: Library Logistics
Teen Tech Week is a national initiative sponsored by YALSA and aimed at teens, their parents, educators, and other adults interested in helping teens succeed in using technology. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that teens are competent and ethical users of technologies, particularly those they encounter in their daily lives and those that are available through libraries. Teen Tech Week encourages teens to use libraries’ digital resources for education and recreation, and to recognize that library staff are qualified, trusted professionals in the field of information technology. Teen Tech Week began in 2007.

In 2013, YALSA’s Teen Tech Week theme was Check In @ your library! This theme encouraged libraries to throw open their physical and virtual doors to teens and showcase the outstanding technology offered, from services such as online homework help and digital literacy–focused programs to resources like e-books, movies, music, audiobooks, databases, and more. It seemed like the perfect time and theme to host a Soldering 101 program, which was a workshop I had been thinking about hosting for a while.

The program was taught by an 11-year-old named Coco whom I met at a local hackerspace, Null Space Labs aka [nsl], that I am a member of. Coco and her father had been going to [nsl] so that she could get help completing her robot Halloween costume. Her involvement at [nsl] grew from that start. I had originally planned to teach the Soldering 101 class myself, but when I met Coco and learned how much she loved robotics, Arduino programming, and soldering, I suggested that she teach the class. (I am a big fan of co-learning and thought it would be empowering for both her and the teens she would be teaching.)

In terms of safety and logistics it was very important to make sure that library staff and administration were very clear on what the teens, Coco, and I were trying to achieve with the program. In addition to promoting the idea that libraries are more than book depositories, the Soldering 101 workshops promoted STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) concepts and provided the teens with an opportunity that they probably would not get at home or at their cash-strapped schools in downtown Los Angeles.

To address the issues of logistics and goals, I put together a proposal that I submitted to the library administration. The proposal outlined the history of Teen Tech Week, including how it is celebrated nationally, an equipment list, program description and agenda (including safety measures), and a list of links to articles about other libraries that have hosted similar programs.
I also asked my library administration to give me a list of their concerns and safety requirements. I went through these concerns and then revised the project proposal and description. Safety measures that we had to clear included securing a permit from our local fire marshal, which required a venue walk-through, and garnering program approval from the city’s risk manager and our building engineer.

We originally planned to hold the class inside the building (which other libraries have done), but our local fire marshal nixed that idea due to ventilation concerns. The biggest hurdles to overcome were the fire marshal's requirements, which included having two fire training–certified adults on hand in case of emergency. Our requirements were very, very strict because the Central Library is famous for having burned down in two arson fires in the late 1980s. I would imagine other organizations would not necessarily have the same issues. I also reassured my library administration, the fire marshal, and the building manager that we would start the workshop with an extensive soldering safety presentation.

Coco and her father put together two PowerPoint presentations. The first PowerPoint focused on soldering safety and had a fashion theme because they had read an article that I had written for the Huffington Post about librarians and fashion. The second PowerPoint featured step-by-step directions on how to put a light-up badge together. (Badges are used to help beginning solderers learn how to solder successfully. See the sidebar for resources for learning more about light-up badges.) Soldering the components onto the light-up badge was the project that the participating teens worked on. The badge was prototyped and designed by my husband, who is also a member of [nsl].

Two of the badge boards were given to Coco in advance so that she could (1) see if she could put them together herself and (2) see if she could teach her older brother how to put it together. Both projects went swimmingly for her, and then she taught the class!

We ended up hosting two sessions so that all of the teens could finish their badges. What was particularly great was that during the second session, some girls (who had never, ever, soldered before) were so confident in their soldering skills that they were teaching the male participants how to finish their badges!

In addition, a few days after the second soldering workshop, one of the girls who had attended the Soldering 101 workshops and an introduction to Scratch workshop at Los Angeles Makerspace (another local maker organization) confided to me that she now wanted to pursue electrical engineering in college and as a career!

What’s a Badge Board?

For the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) the LED badge board used was a DIY version of Learn to Solder Badge kits that Make: Magazine and other vendors sell. You can find these beginner badge kits online at:

Make: Magazine’s Learn to Solder Badge Kit
www.makershed.com/Learn_to_Solder_Skill_Badge_Kit_p/mkls01.htm

Scribbler 2 Robot Badge: Learn to Solder Kit
www.parallax.com/product/28236

For the LAPL workshops, the badge created and programmed was designed to help beginning robot enthusiasts learn how to solder the following:

- Buttons x 2
- 5k Resistors x 3
- Voltage Regulator x 1
- Chip Holder x 1
- Capacitor x 1
- Switch x 1
- 220 Ohm Resistors x 8
- Red LEDs x 8
- Battery Clip x 1

Part 2: Connected Learning and Coco: An interview with Coco Kaleel

Candice Mack: How did you become interested in robots?

Coco Kaleel: When I was little, I was always interested in making things. When I was three, I created a carousel for my stuffed animals (out of Tinkertoys) that had a crankshaft and flywheel mechanism. I had always loved Legos, but when I was seven or eight-ish, my parents got me a set of Lego Mindstorms. Then, I really started to get into robots, but the stiff software and hardware environment with the Mindstorms made me feel a bit limited, so I got into the Arduino, and that was when my journey really took off.

CM: What led you to Null Space Labs?

CK: When I was 10, I went to the Los Angeles Robotics Club to learn a little bit more about programming my Arduino. I learned to solder there. One of the Los
Getting Burned

How to Host a Teen Soldering Program Without Getting Burned

Angeles Robotics Club meetups was a presentation by Rob Bishop about the Raspberry Pi. It happened to be taking place at a hackerspace called Null Space Labs in downtown Los Angeles. As soon as I walked into the space, I knew that I would love it there, so I also became a member of this club. I think I was one of the first kids that they let in!

CM: What did you start learning there?
CK: At Null Space, I started learning about really cool things! I learned surface-mount soldering. I learned about how many electronics work, and I even learned how to use an industrial laser cutter. I used this laser cutter to create things for my school science project and, as the student council secretary at my school, I created a suggestion box with the school emblem laser burned into the sides.

CM: Were you learning about these subjects at home, school, the library, or elsewhere?
CK: I was mostly learning about these subjects at Null Space Labs and the Los Angeles Robotics Club. I learned a little about electronics online and in books, but surface-mount soldering and working a laser cutter are really skills that are needed to be done in person. I also learned a lot about basic electricity and programming the Arduino from online tutorials such as the ones from Adafruit. I’ve also loved Forrest Mims’s books.

CM: How did you decide to teach the Soldering 101 workshops at the library?
CK: Candice asked, and I said yes!

I was sitting on the couches at one end of the hackerspace, learning about gear designs and ratios and how to cut them on a laser cutter, but mostly, I was being social because it was an open house night. We were talking and then we got into the discussion about my Halloween costume (I was going trick-or-treating as a light-up robot that year). I was talking about the troubleshooting and how I soldered the costume. Candice then got the idea for me to teach the class. It was part of Teen Tech Week. I agreed with an emphatic “yes!”

CM: What was that process like?
CK: The process of teaching the class was mostly behind-the-scenes work. Candice helped a lot. I brainstormed and gathered all of the materials that I thought I would need. I got a little info on tutorial formats from my friends at Null Space. I made a PDF of safety instructions where I dressed as Audrey Hepburn (for humor). I got a prototype of the badge from Jeremy (the designer of the board) and talked with him. I assembled the prototype, taking pictures along the way. Then I made a PDF with the photos on how to assemble the kit. I practiced by teaching my brother and a friend with cheap kits we (my dad and I) bought at All Electronics. Of course, this was during the school year, not summer, so I had to figure out how to get this done and still do my homework and practice piano. My parents helped me organize. I gathered all of the materials for the class, and then I thought I was ready.

CM: Did you enjoy working on the board and putting the directions together?
CK: I enjoyed putting together the prototype with help from Jeremy and putting the directions together because it was a great learning process, in addition to the fact that I had never done anything remotely close to this, so there was a lot of collaboration that went on.

CM: Did you enjoy teaching the workshops? What did you learn?
CK: I enjoyed teaching the workshops because I got to meet a bunch of really cool high schoolers and community college kids. I learned about how difficult it is to teach, especially when your class is entirely older than you, and that I need to get to the point and speak louder so I don’t bore anyone.

CM: Do you think the participants enjoyed attending the workshops?
CK: I do think that the participants enjoyed attending the workshops because after a few minutes of complaining that they couldn’t do it, most of the kids were showing their neighbor what to do, advancing ahead of my instruction, or troubleshooting or brainstorming about how to be more efficient with their soldering. Also, the workshop got split up into two days, and most of the kids were able to come back for the second half.

CM: What would you do differently next time you teach a class?
CK: If I were to teach another class, I would definitely practice teaching much more before doing the actual thing and memorize my presentation so that I knew it by heart. I would also try to make my safety presentation more fun (if that’s possible).

CM: What did you do after you taught the workshops?
CK: For me, the workshop inspired me to educate myself more about electronics. I started a website (www.veryhappyrobot.com), where I review electronic kits and give technical advice based on my personal experience. I presented at two conferences. I also got a 3D printer kit (my build is documented on my website) and continued programming on the Arduino. I have recently started playing with the Raspberry Pi, which helped me to get here in the first place.
Kristy Gale is a teen services librarian at the Seattle Public Library's University Branch, Seattle, Washington. She has worked as a middle school and high school teacher, middle school librarian, and a teen services librarian with the Tacoma Public Library. Her focus in Tacoma was to provide programming and instruction in the digital media StoryLab and mobile digital media lab. In this interview, I talk with her about her vision for connected learning and library services for teens.

Jody Wurl: Could you briefly describe connected learning?

Kristy Gale: I feel like I should begin by admitting that I'm not a connected learning expert. I was recently introduced to connected learning as a learning model, and since then I've read a lot and watched quite a few videos on what connected learning truly means. I've done my best to ensure that my work with teens centers around connected learning.

To quote the YALSA report on the future of library services for and with teens: “At the heart of connected learning is the idea that young people learn best when that learning is connected to their passions, desires, and interests.” I realize that connected learning can be difficult to grasp conceptually, but that one idea I think is the most important, and if that's the only piece that really sinks in, you're off to a good start.

So, the key is that connected learning is rooted in interest/passion-driven learning. There's discovery involved that's interest based (find out what teens are interested and create programming around that) and could also be service learning based (driven by a teen's desire to affect positive change). For example, at Tacoma Public Library we partnered with Associated Ministries (AM) to make a video about homeless teens that the Associated Ministries could use at a fundraising event to raise money for building transitional housing for young adults. We approached two of our teens that had become proficient movie producers and regulars in the digital media StoryLab, housed at the library, to take on this task, and they flourished. They combined still images, video, and the audio of an interview about the need for transitional housing from AM. They were so proud of the work they did, and AM ultimately used it in their marketing and fundraising event.

For me, other key pieces of connected learning are:

- Peer mentors and peer collaborators.
- Adult role models.
- The need to uncover teens' interests and make a connection to what they're learning as a way to establish trust.
- A connection to academics—most likely hitting on some or all STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math)-related pieces.
- A focus on content creation: Giving teens the opportunity to be content producers and to leave a program or event with something tangible and/or something that can be celebrated online.
- An understanding that the end product doesn't have to be perfect. The experience is what's most important.
- The importance of providing access to and instruction with digital media tools as a way to level the playing field and at the same time enhance learning and engage teens.

JW: What role does the library have in this learning model?

KG: Our role should be to provide relevant educational opportunities for teens and help them grow up to be inquisitive, engaged adults. We can do this by:

Jody Wurl is a senior librarian at the Hennepin County Public Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Mentoring and acting as positive role models. According to researcher Danah Boyd, teens have a deficit of positive role models in their lives. As library staff working with the age group, we can locate adults in the community that can share their expertise and act as coaches, mentors, and instructors. Or, we can identify teens that have a handle on a concept or technology tool and encourage them to take on mentorship roles.

Modeling. I always encourage library staff to create ahead of time the content that they’re asking teens to create. This will enable them to have an example to show, will give them a better grasp of the roadblocks that teens may encounter during the process, and it will allow them to adjust their instruction accordingly. For example, if you’re teaching a stop-motion animation workshop, you should identify the props (action figures, paper cutouts, etc.), write out a short storyboard and/or shot list and/or script, create the sets/backgrounds, shoot the story, edit the photos or video, add voiceovers and background effects, export the film, and share it to a video hosting site.

KG: I try to use digital media tools and “maker” concepts to foster learning. For example, at the Tacoma Public Library:

Interactive Media Teen Book Club
It was set up like a traditional book club for the first hour. We met monthly, discussed the book of the month, and ate snacks. During the second hour, we incorporated digital media, and teens did the following (most of the content they created was posted on the book club blog):

- Created video booktalks
- Interviewed and filmed guest authors
- Read a book and then created a short film for the 90-Second Newbery Film Festival
- Discussed their own writing and then made digital book cover art.

Web Show/Video Blog Workshop
With the local organization, Reel Grrls, we hosted a two-day workshop for teen girls and focused on how women are portrayed in media. Media literacy was a key component of the workshop. The participating teens analyzed everything from yogurt commercials and how they target women, to a short video that focused on gender stereotypes, to Ill Doctrine’s How to Tell Someone They Sound Racist.

After a whirlwind of learning camera angles, shots, and scriptwriting, the girls formed groups and created their own video for a vlog/web show. Their topics included: gender roles in commercials, how female characters are portrayed in anime, profiting on the 2012 apocalypse, and how the beauty industry preys on women’s insecurities to sell products by using sex and pushing stereotypes.

Summer 2014
In the summer of 2014, I’m going to bring connected learning to the University Branch of the Seattle Public Library. One thing I’m going to pilot is a MaKey MaKey event. If you aren’t familiar with MaKey MaKey, as their website states, you can “turn everyday objects into touchpads and combine them with the internet. It’s a simple Invention Kit for Beginners and Experts doing art, engineering, and everything inbetween.”

For this event, I plan to set up one of the library’s mobile labs, which will allow me to have four MaKey MaKey stations. As the facilitator of the event, I will explain the science and technology around how MaKey MaKey works. I’ll show a video that gives some ideas of what to do with MaKey MaKey. Then, teens, in groups, can go from station to station trying things out.

I also will host documentary panel discussions. Although I work with teens, a big part of my work is the outreach I do in the University District of Seattle. I connect with organizations that are dedicated to working with homeless youth ranging in age from 15 to 25. The University Branch is unique in that we have a lot of homeless youth and adults, college kids, and neighborhood families and individuals that utilize our space and resources. Since I’ve been working at the branch, I’ve been hoping to come up with a program that could help to work toward breaking down barriers between the haves and have-nots that use the library every day and that will also encourage empathy. I plan on offering a film series, possibly titled Movies That Matter, with panel-led discussions. The movies will mostly be documentaries such as Positive Youth, a film about HIV positive youth (many of whom are homeless) and Invisible Young, a film about youth living on the streets in Seattle. The panelists will be made up of homeless youth, formerly homeless youth, the movie producer of Invisible Young, and staff and volunteers representing the various organizations that provide service to at-risk and homeless youth. The homeless youth that I work with have already demonstrated their excitement at being a part of this project.

JW: Can you recommend any first steps for libraries that are thinking about moving into connected learning programming and services?

KG: Design programming that incorporates a few or all of the following pieces:

- content creation
- problem solving
- discovery
And, most importantly, a focus on individual teen passions and interests.

JW: Can you recommend any resources for library staff to learn more about connected learning?

Most definitely. An obvious place to go is the http://connectedlearning.tv site. There you will find, infographics, and FAQs on connected learning.

My favorite resource has been Scott McLeod’s Dangerously Irrelevant blog post on connected learning: http://dangerouslyirrelevant.org/tag/connie-yowell. He provides great summaries of each of the connected learning videos featured on the connectedlearning.tv website.

References
2. “MaKey MaKey.” MaKey MaKey (official site) http://makeymakey.com/ (accessed May 6, 2014).
**It’s a Teen Blogger Contest!**

As part of Teen Read Week™, YALSA is hosting a Teen Blogger contest in conjunction with YALSA’s blog, The Hub. Teens aged 12–18 can sign up now through August 1, 2014 to participate in the contest for a chance to guest blog for YALSA’s young adult literature blog, The Hub. Selected teens will blog about a wide range of topics related to YA literature while also further developing their writing and blogging skills.

Blog posts written by the teen bloggers will be featured during the week of October 12–18 in celebration of Teen Read Week. Selected participants will be notified in August. More details and guidelines about the contest can be found on the Teen Read Week website at www.ala.org/teenread under the Teen Corner tab. Teen Read Week will be celebrated Oct. 12–18 this year with the theme “Turn Your Dreams into Reality @ your library.”

**Teens’ Top Ten Voting Starts Aug. 15**

Teens’ Top Ten voting begins August 15 and ends September 15. The votes will determine the 2014 Teens’ Top Ten booklist, which will be announced online during Teen Read Week™, October 12–18.

The nominee list features 25 titles and can be found on the Teens’ Top Ten website www.ala.org/teensstopten and on the new teen friendly Reads 4 Teens website www.ala.org/yalsa/reads4teens.

Library workers seeking new titles for readers’ advisory, collection development, or simply to give to their teens as part of summer reading programming can see the 2014 nominations at the TTT website at www.ala.org/teensstopten. In addition, the Teens’ Top Ten toolkit offers customizable bookmarks and flyers, program ideas, and much more to encourage teens at your library to read the nominated titles.

**Printz Award Committee**

Paige Battle
Franklin Escobedo
Kelly Jensen
Lalitha Nataraj

Interested in running for 2015 YALSA office or want to nominate a colleague? Contact Priscille Dando, chair of the 2015 Governance Nominating Committee at pdando@gmail.com.

**New Ready-to-Use Readers’ Advisory Tools**

Just download, print and distribute! These two digital downloads offer hundreds of recommended reads for teens by genre.

  (download includes 5 brochures, 1 handout and 1 poster)
  (download includes 37 pamphlets and 8 bookmarks)

**New Collection Development Grant**

YALSA’s Margaret Edwards Trust Collection Development Grant awards $5,000 for a school or public library to use towards improving or expanding its teen collection. Funds may be used for print, non-print and/or digital materials. All personal YALSA members who represent a public library or school library are eligible to apply. Up to four grants will be awarded in 2014. All applicants must be current personal members of YALSA.
ALA/YALSA at the time the application is submitted. Applications must be submitted by Nov. 1 via the online form http://ow.ly/xwVn4

Bring YALSA to YOUR State!

Conferences
If you’re involved with planning a state or regional conference, consider including YALSA in your plans. There are several ways that YALSA can support your event. YALSA could possibly do one or more of the following:

- Provide a YALSA leader to be a keynote speaker
- Provide a YALSA leader to be a session presenter(s)
- Host a pre-conference (based on our licensed institute or e-course content)
- Staff a YALSA exhibit booth
- Donate certain items, such as books, for a raffle or other charity event
- Provide handouts or brochures to put into conference bags or distribute at sessions
- Explore the possibility of co-hosting a ticketed event, such as an author lunch, and sharing the proceeds
- Co-host a social event, such as a happy hour or coffee klatch

All of the items mentioned above depend on the availability of resources and member leaders during the time of the actual event. If you’d like to pursue the idea of including YALSA in your state or regional conference, please get in touch with our Member Relations Guru, Letitia Smith, at lsmith@ala.org or 312.280.4390. We’d love to come hang out with you! To see what states are already on our list to visit for 2014–2015, check out http://ow.ly/popSJ

Full Day Trainings
YALSA can bring face-to-face training to you! You provide the attendees and the space; we’ll provide training materials and a content expert. The following full-day workshops are available for licensing from YALSA:

- Beginners’ Guide to Teens and Libraries
- Get Graphic @ Your Library
- Power Up with Print
- Speak Up, Stand Up, Step Up: Advocating for Teens
- Teens & Tech: Current Trends

To learn more, including pricing information, visit www.ala.org/yalsa/face-face-training or contact Nicole Gibby Munguia at nmunguia@ala.org or 312.280.5293

Enter YALSA’s Maker Contest!
Teen and tweens in your library are learning new skills by making brilliant stuff—tell us about it as well as how you’re facilitating making at your library. YALSA is asking you to share your successful programs so that we can compile and share our best practices with the library community!

Submit a winning program and you could earn bragging rights and win fab prizes, such as MayKey MayKey invention kits. At least one prize will be distributed per category of library (based on budget size). To learn more about making in libraries and get some great ideas, check out the Maker & DIY wiki, which includes a free, downloadable Making in the Library Toolkit: http://ow.ly/xQwbH

Criteria for selection:
1. The purpose of your program must be to introduce or engage young adults in some aspect of making (as defined by the Making in the Library Toolkit).
2. The program must be specifically designed for and targeted at reaching young adults (ages 12–18 years.)
3. All or part of your program must take place in Summer 2014 (June–August).
4. All applicants must be current personal members of ALA/YALSA at the time the application is submitted.
5. Entries should be models of clarity and completeness.
6. The program must have appropriate and clearly stated outcomes.
7. The program must demonstrate an innovative approach to engaging teens through making.
8. Applications must be received no later than Sept. 1, 2014. Winners will be notified by email, and announced the week of Oct. 6, 2014. Apply via the online form: http://ow.ly/xQvHR
Become a Friend of YALSA

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

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

Become a friend in any giving category by making your tax-deductible donation via credit card or sending a contribution by mail.

Visit www.ala.org/yalsa/givetoyalsa/give today.

YALSA’s Third Thursday Webinars

60 minute webinars on timely topics. Presented by experts. Commercial free.

See what we’ll be talking about this spring at www.ala.org/yalsa/webinars.

Live webinars are available only to members and they are free as a member benefit.

Webinars 24/7:

All archived webinars are free for members. They’re posted after the live presentation in the For Members Only section of the website and nonmembers can buy access for $19 at www.ala.org/yalsa/webinarondemand.
Register Now!

YALSA’s Young Adult Literature Symposium
Keeping it Real: Finding the True Teen Experience in YA Literature
November 14–16, 2014 • Austin, Texas

Join over 45 authors as well as a community of librarians and educators to explore the vibrant world of Young Adult literature!

The YA Lit Symposium provides you with knowledge that makes you more effective and tools that make you more credible!

www.ala.org/yalitsymposium  #yalit14

“The Symposium gave me motivation and connections to keep me in the loop and moving forward in my work.”
—2012 participant
SUPERHEROES STEP ASIDE—THERE’S A NEW VILLAIN IN TOWN, AND HE’S MAKING BAD LOOK GOOD

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