INSIDE:
EVERYONE DESERVES A PLACE IN THE LIBRARY
WHY SHOULD LIBRARIES CARE ABOUT TEENS & TECHNOLOGY
LEARN TO CODE: IT’S A LIFE SKILL AND MORE....

TEENS, TECH & LEARNING ISSUE
Life’s little to-do list.

- [ ] Estate Plan
- [ ] Guardianship
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About This Cover

This Teen Tech Week™ (March 9–15, 2013), YALSA invites you to DIY @ your library!® Demonstrate the value your library gives to the community by offering teens a space to extend learning beyond the classroom where they can explore, create and share content. From maker spaces, to coding classes to online knitting clubs, libraries can leverage the do-it-yourself theme to show how you connect in meaningful ways with the teens in your community. Official Teen Tech Week Products, such as the poster on the cover, are available at www.alastore.org.
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Young Adult Library Services is the official journal of the Young Adult
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include articles of current interest to the profession, act as a showcase for best
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official record of the organization.

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Over the past few years it’s been really exciting to see how
technology is taking on a new role in libraries. No longer
is technology just a resource for looking up information
on Google or in a library database. Instead it’s an integral part
of helping teens in the community learn about a topic in which
they are interested, gain skills, and get involved. Teens use library
technology to research topics and to create content, collaborate
with others, and connect to experts in a field of interest.

YALSA’s 2014 Teen Tech Week™ theme DIY @ your
library® is a perfect recognition of the way teens use technology in
libraries. It’s all about doing.

That’s what you will read about in this issue of YALS. Carla
Avitabile and Christie Gilbrich’s article on the Teen Tech Week
theme will certainly give you a lot of ideas about how to create
technical opportunities for teens in the library. Then read Tiffany
Williams’s piece that helps library staff think about how to connect
the doing to learning. Next you might check out Jess Klein’s article
on the power of Web making for teens and communities. That
should motivate you to think about how you can help teens be
active members of the community through their use of technology.
Also, make sure to read what Sheryl Grant has to say about
badging as a way to show others what you (and teens) know.

This issue of YALS also highlights ALA’s recent leadership
institute that YALSA member Jamie Watson took part in. Plus,
Sarah Ludwig eloquently speaks out about the importance of
serving all teens no matter what their background is.

When it comes to technology there is always something new
to learn. This issue of YALS helps you to do that.
Everyone can participate.
Learning happens by doing.
Challenge is constant.
Everything is interconnected.

In the last issue of YALS, Mimi Ito and Crystle Martin described connected learning and shared ideas of how to relate that educational model to library services to teens. I’m excited about connected learning for a number of reasons: it promotes an increased connection between in- and out-of-school networks, advocates for multiple entry points to learning and opportunities for teens, and demands that stakeholders (parents, educators, technology makers, youth) link together to envision and create real change. But do you know what I think is the most intriguing? Connected learning is not a fixed curriculum but rather an approach that if done successfully, will shift and fluctuate as quickly as (and perhaps in unison with) the teens that we serve. According to the authors of the Connected Learning Report—http://bit.ly/CLreport—connected learning is “not a new approach but an ongoing, changing one with a core set of goals and values” promoting services that “are a complex alchemy of designed and emergent elements in a process of experimentation and flux.”

I’m thrilled that this issue of YALS has a number of articles describing projects and programs that I think illustrate perfectly some of the key components of connected learning (interest-driven and peer-supported learning, production-driven and openly networked projects) and showcase the very different ways in which they (and you) are able to do it. While I still have you, let’s get back to what I started with. Those phrases, actually all connected learning design principles, sound pretty awesome, don’t they? Imagine how invigorating your work life would be if they (along with support, structure, and a healthy budget, of course) were the mantra of your principal or library director?

Imagine if we not only provided teens with programs and services that allowed for this kind of play and experimentation, but built structures in your own work circles and professional development plans that did the same thing?

Part of my job as President of YALSA is to appoint and work with a group of members to plan and implement a program at ALA Annual Conference. And while I’ve been busy being your President, they’ve done something truly amazing. After an initial meeting via Google+ Hangouts, in which I described the themes of the program and where I imagined that we might go with it, they came up with something that perfectly encapsulates those aforementioned awesome design principles. Mirroring the essence of connected learning, they’re breaking outside of a one-time, one-sided panel model to create a framework in which we can actively participate and explore together in Las Vegas, but also engage and discuss from wherever we are. Look for blog posts, hangouts, and good conversation throughout the rest of my presidential year related to connected learning and how by embracing its tenants, we might create stronger networks and support systems to prepare our teens for social, work, and economic readiness. I’m ready for the challenge, are you?

YALS
A s someone who loves to learn and has been fortunate to work for a variety of libraries that support professional development, a “leadership training” was not necessarily a new concept to me. I attended the wonderful Maryland Library Leadership Institute in 2000, where I had my first exposure to the enneagram learning styles that I have ever since continued to use (and teach) in my professional and personal life. In addition, I have attended a variety of other workshops and classes over the years. Without a doubt, however, the ALA Leadership Institute was the strongest one of these types of programs that I have attended.

As the ALA website states, the “Leadership Institute is a unique 4-day immersive leadership development program for future library leaders.” Attendees were selected from a pool of applicants and the program was facilitated and attended by librarians, but it was not library focused.

The agenda for the Institute focused on the following topics:

- Leadership
- Interpersonal competence
- Power and influence
- Community engagement
- Strategy, innovation, and change
- Leadership development

Participants were taught by great leaders, Maureen Sullivan, past ALA president, and Kathryn Diess, Content Strategist for the Association of College and Research Libraries, each with many years of library leadership experience. All in attendance were librarians. This was a great way to create a shared frame of reference.

One thing that stood out to me was that this institute did not focus on a future of libraries guessing game, or provide an opportunity for a libraries-are-dying weep fest. In fact, the way I describe the week is, “Put your own oxygen mask on first before trying to help those around you.” This was about developing YOUR OWN leadership strengths first before attempting to make changes or save your library.

Participants learned that self-awareness is considered one of the first areas to focus on when planning one’s own leadership growth. Everyone had to answer the question, “What personal qualities support your work as a leader and give your work its own distinctive style?” We learned that the answer varies from person to person. We are not the same.

Early in the program we were given a leadership self-assessment test to rank our strengths and weaknesses. When I returned to work, I gave the test to my staff to give them the chance, on a volunteer basis and anonymously, to fill it out about me. That way I could see how well I had assessed myself. I was pleased to see that my self-awareness pretty much matched the staff’s view, with one exception—all mentioned one weakness that they saw in me that I hadn’t recognized. To me, what was interesting about this was that it is definitely something that I recognize about myself, but I hadn’t considered it a weakness. Perspective is everything!

Reflect Reflect Reflect
I’m sure you’ve attended seminars, just like I have, that are all work, work, work. You go home a combination of energized and exhausted. Then, after re-entry, and some time, much of what you learned unfortunately goes by the wayside. But, because as a part of the leadership institute participants had time at the end of every day to reflect on the day and make some notes, there was a chance to solidify the learning and guarantee that everyone would take back what they learned and put it into practice.

What did I write in my reflections every day? SLOW DOWN! Every day, a concept was taught related to the importance of being deliberate, of being strategic. Sometimes in a busy work day, you (and others) make knee-jerk decisions. This sometimes can’t be avoided, but it shouldn’t be done as a regular practice. It’s O.K. to tell someone that you need time to make the best decision.

Focusing on Practical Applications
Each participant brought a case study of a management issue to the seminar.
Throughout the week, a small group would work on the case studies applying the leadership techniques learned during the institute. As the “client” we needed to not get defensive but rather to be open and willing to receive the questioning from the small group we worked with. As managers, we also tend to be problem solvers. Sometimes problem solving is not what is needed. Sometimes a dialogue and deeper inquiry is a better step to the solution. These case study discussions helped to bring this home.

An idea that resonated with me was that the only way to really know another person’s intentions is to learn what they are from the person. For example, someone asks a question or sends an e-mail that sends you into a tailspin. The cause might really be that you are putting your own interpretations and assumptions onto that communication without really knowing what is behind it. An effective leader will frequently say, “Help me understand why you wrote this. What problem are you trying to solve?” Instead of reacting, you need to learn more.

The further readings section of the seminar handouts was 100 percent leadership focused, not library focused. I definitely believe that the best way to improve libraries is to read widely outside of the library profession. Navel gazing helps no one. That said, the Harvard Business Review was not on my radar prior to this experience as something to read regularly. Now it is. Each month has strong, thought-provoking articles about improving leadership styles. Thanks to our library’s Zinio subscription, I’m now a regular reader.

Don’t Miss It!
According to facilitator Kathryn Deiss, plans are underway for the 2014 Leadership Institute. Watch out for more information and the application in early 2014! YALS

Reference
Be Flexible with the 2014 Teen Tech Week™ Theme
DIY @ your library®

By Carla Avitabile and Christie Gibrich

Teen Tech Week (March 9–15) emphasizes the technologies the library has to offer. DIY (otherwise known as Do It Yourself) has many applications. It can range from the difficult (figuring out how to replace the screen on your laptop) to the easy (making a drawer pull out of a piece of wire). It can be high tech (learning how to write computer programs) or low tech (duct tape crafts) or anything in between. DIY has been around as long as someone had the thought, “Hey I can make, fix, craft, or replace that myself.” The beauty of DIY is that it doesn’t take specialized tools or even specialized skills; all you need is a willingness to try to figure it out yourself and the enthusiasm to share it with your teens. In our technology-based society, DIY can be adapted to almost anything teens are already doing in your library. Teaching a teen how to do research using databases is teaching them how to be DIY. Having a teen help you create content for your teen Web page is DIY. Teaching them how to sew is DIY.

Social Media Is Very DIY
DIY is a wonderful theme for libraries with limited digital resource and access to tech. We all wish that we had more money for programs and the newest tech and are green with envy when we hear about libraries with iPads for checkouts and 3-D printers. Yet DIY is a theme anyone can implement with things that you have available anywhere. Don’t think about what you cannot do, think about what you can do. Social media is very much DIY—think about what your library doesn’t have yet that you want, and get your teens involved. Do you have a teen blog? Create one with Blogger or WordPress or another free site, and then have the teens come up with graphics and content. Are your teens more interested in Tumblr? Create a teen-centric library using Tumblr to capture their attention, launch it during Teen Tech Week, and then invite them to create content. Want something less intensive? Celebrate Teen Tech Week by organizing your teens to help add/create digital content to the library website, or have teens use their phones to photo document the library. Allowing teens to participate in the library’s social media sites also teaches them how to be responsible purveyors of information. Introducing them to your library’s social media policy is an easy way to teach them about the proper etiquette for posting online, especially in a professional setting. Additionally, you can use that time to start helping them with the fine points of digital footprints—helping teens to think what do they want available for all to see, what they don’t want available for all to see, and what people can and will find even if they don’t mean them to.

CARLA AVITABILE a librarian for the last three years, currently is a teen librarian for the Marin County Free Library System at the Novato Library, Novato, California. She has been a YALSA member for two years and is serving on her first committee with Teen Tech Week. She also regularly reviews teen fiction for the Bay Area Young Adult Librarians (BAYA) and is their Book Reviews Editor. CHRISTIE GIBRICH is the Senior Librarian/Manager for the Tony Shotwell Life Center Branch Library in Grand Prairie, Texas. She has served on numerous committees with ALA and YALSA and is currently chair of the Rainbow Project (GLBT-RT/SRRT). She blogs about anything and everything YA at Teen Librarian Toolbox. Teen Tech Week is her most recent YALSA committee.
Thinking Outside the Box Is Core to DIY

Think outside the traditional parameters of Teen Tech Week, and invest time in programs that will reach multiple age ranges, across the generations, and across city departments. Use Teen Tech Week to launch a more adventurous ongoing project where teens collect oral histories from senior citizens and then upload them to an existing or a brand new YouTube channel. Many libraries have programs where teens teach seniors to use computers and the Internet; combine Teen Tech Week with a senior Tech Awareness Week, and have teens show seniors how to load e-books onto their e-readers or how to upload photos to their Facebook pages. Partner with your Parks and Recreation Department to advertise where seniors are already using your city resources. If your library has one, this is a perfect time to show off your library e-branch app as well! You hear all the time about teen private (and explicit) photos going viral and online bullying or sexting. This is not only an opportunity for teenagers to be reminded of important Internet safety but also a chance for them to teach other less savvy users the do’s and don’ts of online socializing.

Think about what you can do that would capture your teens’ attention. In a lot of areas, Teen Tech Week falls during spring break. Take the time before Teen Tech Week to talk to your teens and see what they want in their library and with their library programming. Maybe their ideal program is a day just sitting back and watching movies. If your library has an umbrella movie license, pull movies that they want to watch and set up a Twitter hashtag for the movie fest that will allow them to comment throughout the day on what they’re doing and what they think about the movie, à la Mystery Science 3000 or RiffTrax. Maybe they want console gaming—let them loose with the Xbox 360 and sets of Minecraft, along with tables for Minecraft-related crafts and spaces for board games and card games for those who are waiting their turn. You don’t have to let on that while you’re letting them chill, you’re helping them fulfill a host of the 40 developmental assets for adolescents.

Or upcycle (taking something and making it even better) your DIY. Become a collector of things that would be amazing to upcycle, like glass bottles, straws, magazines, or old T-shirts, and then scour the Internet for ideas. Or let the teens loose with your craft closet and the ideas that you found. Pringles cans, hardback-weeded books, old stationery, and yarn create excellent bases for upcycled crafts.

Connect with your technology department and get old keyboards and pry off keys for jewelry and other accessories, or take an old CPU apart to see how it works. Send a call out to your staff for any old technology that they don’t use anymore or that is broken (remotes, printers, cell phones, etc.) and after taking out the bits that could be dangerous, let the teens take it completely apart to see the inner workings of the tech that they use, and then use the guts of the tech in completely new ways. Let them explore their creativity in new ways and learn about the natural resources used in creating electronics as well as the proper disposal of e-waste.

Makerspaces Are Extremely DIY

Makerspaces are the newest buzzword in library land. They are spaces and materials dedicated to creation and invention. We’ve seen libraries with 3-D printers, giant Hulk statues, and other wonderful tech labs where creativity and resourcefulness have been paired with the library to great success. In reality, all you need to begin your own pop-up makerspace is time to devote to the program, an idea of what you want to do, and a smidge of start-up money to get things rolling.

Makerspaces can be as simple duct tape programs creating bow ties and pens and wallets, or letting teens loose with pony beads, pipe cleaners, yarn, and stretch cord. They can be as mid-level as Lego programs with free builds or specifications of ideas on what to create. They can be as tech intensive as a mini-programming lab filled with several Raspberry Pi computers with WiFi cards and wireless keyboards ready to help teach programming basics to a room full of teens or the basics of robotics using building kits similar to robotics competitions. Even simple maker projects provide teenagers with the opportunity to get practical hands-on skills using common place tools such as a screwdriver. Makerspaces, even spaces with commonplace tools, provide teens with a learning environment without the pressures of a traditional classroom. Allowing teens to experiment on their own with basic tools or more complicated technology gives them the opportunity to learn from their mistakes (or their successes) without having to worry about making the grade.

Low Tech Is Awesome DIY

Teens are often savvy tech users and many adapt to things extremely quickly. However, at times they don’t know the basics of living “off the grid.” Things that we (or our grandparents) took for granted as basic knowledge can be completely bizarre to a teen today. They can create a Prezi, but don’t know how to take up a hem or sew a button. They might know how to create a Vine, but do they know how to change a car tire or replace windshield wiper fluid in a car? They might know how to unlock an iPhone, but can they keep track of finances and not just trust the electronic bank.
Be Flexible with the 2014 Teen Tech Week™ Theme DIY @ your library®

ledger? They might never use cash, but can they calculate a tip or to split a check between friends? They can text type faster than we can read, but do they know how to compose a thank-you note or how to create a resume? All of these things and more will come into play sooner than later, yet your teens may not have anyone to show them. Take the DIY Teen Tech Week to the extremely basic level and start a Life.hack series for teens and young adults (or new adults even) showing life skills that they’re going to need.

Take the DIY Teen Tech Week theme and create a series of workshops and videos that show teens how to create a safe presence on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites so they won’t end up on HuffPost or other news sites as the most misbehaved teens of the week. Invite college admission officers and local employers to discuss how they conduct interviews and review applications, and explain how important the role social media plays in someone’s life, whether they know it or not. Note the harm of bullying, and use tools like the Wayback Machine to show that things posted on the Internet never disappear.

DIY is very program and learning friendly! We all know that programming can be expensive and varying demographics means that a successful program in Toledo is going to bomb in Sacramento. This is why DIY is so great—it can fit almost any budget and be modified to fit any audience. There is no doubt that you are already coming up with cool projects for your own library Teen Tech Week.

For more ideas, take a look at the Teen Tech Week Ning (http://teentechweek.ning.com/). This is a place where you will find programming ideas, conversation, and resources. YALS

WHERE DOES A FIRSTBORN GIRL FIT IN A WORLD DOMINATED BY MEN?

When Tiadone was born, her parents had two choices: leave their daughter outside the community to die in the wilds, or raise her as male and force her to suppress all feminine traits. Now, as the first female living as male in her village, Tiadone must prove her father didn’t make a mistake by letting her live.

Scan to watch the trailer! Or visit http://bit.ly/lpIRM6

BlinkYABooks.com
On March YALSA members will spend a week celebrating teens and technology during YALSA’s seventh annual Teen Tech Week. While teens’ use of technology continues to rise, especially as today’s teens have always had technology in their lives, teens are not always using the library’s non-print resources. Teen Tech Week gives libraries a chance to showcase the technology they have for teens, and also allows teens to learn, or improve, new skills or concepts, such as keeping safe in the virtual world. This article discusses why it is important to focus on teen technology use and skills, including common misconceptions, the digital divide, how libraries can help, and why it matters at all.

Misconceptions About Teens and Technology
It’s easy to see how a few teens interact with technology and try to generalize those experiences to the entire population. When a teen helps someone set up a computer or download an app to their smartphone, it’s a simple leap to assume they are all extremely knowledgeable about technology. Similarly, it’s not difficult to think that because teens sometimes choose to share more information than an adult might share in an online environment, that the teens do not understand privacy. However, as teen advocates, we can do much more for teens by recognizing that anecdotal evidence cannot be generalized to the whole population. An accurate assessment of both technology abilities and gaps in technological knowledge, on the individual and community level, is important to designing and implementing experiences that teens will enjoy and learn from.

There are a number of misconceptions about teens and their use of technology. One such misconception is that teens know everything there is to know about technology. Do teens really know as much as we give them credit for? Or is it possible that they know a few skills, which seem so complex, that we attribute knowledge of an entire set of understandings to them? That girl who plays World of Warcraft for hours and can get rid of computer viruses: she can’t adjust the margins in a word-processing document, and has no idea how to stop getting viruses in the first place. Those kids texting all day have no idea how to format a resume. They can Google anything and find it on Wikipedia, but don’t know the first thing about using the libraries’ vast information stored in databases (or even what databases are), or how to switch to Google Scholar to find credible information. They have misunderstandings about how information works on the Internet, often attributing both credibility and free use to items that are not either. Just as many of them cannot print an e-mail properly and cannot copy and paste an image into another program for printing. In truth, teens know what they use, what they practice, which often means that they are fluent in cellphone, social networking, and gaming. This often does not include a skill in databases, productivity suites such as Microsoft Office, or citing another’s work properly.

Another misconception is that teens do not need to go through the same learning process with technology that other people do, that they just “get” it. Yes, it may seem that technology magically works for this age group, but this is not the same as teens REALLY knowing how technology works and how to leverage all of its potential. What is actually happening

TIFFANY WILLIAMS is a graduate of Clarion University of Pennsylvania. She served on the YALSA STEM Resources Task Force and is a current member of the Teen Tech Week Committee. With a passion for both teens and technology, she actively searches for ways to demonstrate the value of both to the larger community. You can follow her on Twitter @Tichwi.
is that teens are using these devices on a daily new basis. When confronted with something new, they look for familiarity with what they already know, which can look like knowing without learning. They may pick things up faster, not because it is technology, but because they are teens and because technology has always been a part of their lives, for as long as they can remember. When something new does come along, learning naturally comes easier when you are younger.

A final misconception is that every teenager has access to a cell phone, generally a smartphone, and at least one computer. In truth, not all families can afford for each member of the household to have a personal device. Of those that can afford a one device to one person ratio, not all of them have high-speed Internet, many relying on cell and data plans, which limits how much access teens have on a monthly basis. Additionally, teens have far less access to technology in school than many people realize. Many classrooms are not equipped for individual students to use technology except when presenting to the class. School libraries have computers, but students have a limited amount of time, if any, to use those computers before and after school. This difference in access is often called the digital divide.

The Digital Divide
The digital divide, as you may know, focuses on the difference between those with access to technology and those without. More than just a current buzzword, the digital divide describes a phenomenon that is not only very real, but also very relevant in an increasingly digital world. There is more to the digital divide than just access to pieces of technology. Another component of the digital divide is a difference in the skills people have. There is a divide between those with digital skills and those without.

There are several components to skill development; the lack of any one of these can lead to a divide. One such component is the access to software, and it is important to remember that access to a computer is not necessarily analogous with access to software. For years software was expensive, both for individuals and public institutions. Increasingly, there are free versions of software available to download as an alternative. Another component is the availability of resources from which teens learn. These resources could be people who are knowledgeable about a skill, websites with video tutorials, or access to technology databases. As cloud storage and access to programs increase, teens are more reliant on Internet connections to view and edit documents. Without a steady, reliable Internet connection, teens cannot even access the files they require.

How does the digital divide start? The divide can manifest in a number of ways. The following offers an example of how one fictional teen, Cameron, falls behind. It begins as a matter of simple access. Cameron’s family has only one computer in the home. This means that access is shared among the whole family, with the youngest members of the family often getting less screen time. Unfortunately, Cameron has three older siblings, who each need the computer for homework in the evening. Their homework is more “complicated,” and so their parents allow the older siblings more computer time than Cameron. Even in these situations of shared access, the impact of the digital divide can be seen. Cameron is consistently given a few hours less of computer time than the older siblings each week. Cameron could fall over one hundred hours behind each year. What begins as a small difference in the amount of access between teens can soon snowball into larger differences in competency. Over the course of several years, this adds up. You can learn a lot in one hundred hours, and you can miss a lot in that time, too. Some may argue that many of those younger family members will have phones, but that is not the same as access to a computer. Phones and computers, while similar, have different capabilities, and not all of them directly translate to each other.

The same teens that fall behind because of the digital divide are often the groups that libraries are currently reaching out to through a variety of programs and services—minorities, lower income patrons, first-generation patrons, and other marginalized groups.

Why All of This Matters
There are conflicting reports about the number of technology jobs that will be created in the next decade, but they all agree there will be an increase in technology jobs in the future. Even those teens who do not go into a technology field will need to use technology in their daily lives. They will need to create and properly format resumes. They will need to efficiently find information, for themselves, or their bosses. They will likely use e-mail to communicate with colleagues, share documents to work on group projects, which will not end with graduation. While the technology may be different in ten years, it will grow out of current technology, and falling behind now will make it more difficult to catch up in the future. Even now, it is nearly impossible to apply for a job without the ability to upload a resume and fill out an application online.

How Libraries Help
Libraries already provide computer and Internet access for their patrons. In some libraries, especially smaller libraries, there are few, if any, computers that are specifically designated for teens, despite
the fact in many of these same buildings children and adults each have their own set of computers. Which computers teens use depends often on whether the library groups young adult services with children’s or adult services. In other libraries, teens are not allowed to check out technology such as laptops, e-readers, cameras, and other peripherals, generally because of the high price of such items and concerns about damage and theft. The first step that libraries must take is fighting to provide equal access to technology for teens. This may mean changing policies to allow them to check out technology, or making sure they have as much access to computers as any other age group. Space considerations are often an issue when it comes to providing computers, but a set of laptops is easy to store and gives teens the freedom to move about or congregate around the technology without interfering with other computer users.

Access to technology is only the first step in bridging the digital divide. The second step is to find ways for teens to develop their technology skills. This can be done in two ways, through programming and through resources. Before taking either of those steps librarians need to assess the skills their teens are lacking, which can be different depending on the community. A good place to start is by talking to parents, teachers, other librarians, and the teens themselves. Find out what skills the schools expect them to have, what questions are the teens asking while working on computers, and what skills they are likely to need in college, in employment after high school for future jobs, and in life in general. One way to gather this information is through a survey. Create one for students and one for teachers. Talk to the local schools to see if they can pass the surveys out during homeroom, or another class that all students take. You may be able to make use of the school’s e-mail list to send a link out to parents. Another way to gather the information within the library is to keep a record of what questions the teens ask when they are using technology.

### Programming and Resources

Not all teens are going to come to programs. No matter how creative the name, fun the activities, or interactive the program is, there will always be teens who for whatever reason are unable to participate. For these teens, it is important to have a variety of resources that they can use to develop technology skills. Teens are likely to be drawn to different types of resources than adults. Try to find ones that are graphic and fun, but do not sound like they were written for children. Look for resources that go beyond computers to look at tablets, phones, and cameras, as well as different types of programs that these devices use. Books are only a start, and when it comes to technology, can be an inefficient use of funds as technology changes so rapidly. You will also want to find websites, videos, podcasts, and other web-based resources. An advantage to these resources is that they are generally free; you just have to do the work of curating the content in a way that will appeal to teens. You may also find that your library subscribes to one or more databases that provide instruction in computer programs that you can highlight for the teens.

When it comes to programming, it is easy to say that the reason there are no computer skill programs offered to teens is because they do not attend Microsoft Office workshops or setting up e-mail classes. Teens are not passionate about either of these topics, so it is unlikely that they will pursue them on their own time. Instead, find out what your teens are interested in and passionate about. Using a survey, as mentioned before, is one way to find out what your teens are excited about. However, expressed interest on a survey does not always translate into attendance at a program. Take your survey results a step further and bring them to your teen advisory board. If you don’t have one established, Teen Tech Week is a great reason to start one! Giving teens the chance to plan and implement the program

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### What Makes Great Tech Resources for Teens?

Technology changes at a pace that the print publishing world cannot always keep up with. In order to keep up with these changes, librarians should cultivate a list of digital resources for teens. It is important to keep these resources up to date. Some tips for choosing resources:

- Teens, and others, sometimes have a hard time paying attention for long periods of time. Look for resources that have a variety of deliveries. Short videos, concise text, and plenty of chances to experiment with what they are learning.
- Every teen is different and learns in a different manner. Similar to the last tip, look for a variety of resources, not just one resource with a variety of instruction methods. Some things to look for: text-heavy resources, video resources, audio resources, and resources to practice new skills.
- Teens are very visual. Look for resources that have an appealing design. Vibrant or contrasting colors, clean and simple, not too cluttered. For digital resources, the design is the cover that can draw teens in or send them running.
- Teens are not children. Overly simplified text or graphics may appear condescending to some teens. Make sure the resources are at their level, and don’t be afraid to find resources that will challenge them.
Designing a Good Survey

The key to designing a good survey is using the 5 W's (and an H).

**Who:** Who is your survey targeted at? Keep in mind your target respondents’ reading level and attention span. Young kids will do better with shorter words and fewer questions. Try to keep library jargon out (unless you are surveying other librarians). Also, think about the kind of information that the age group is likely to disclose.

**What:** What do you want to find out? Imagine the survey is over. You are looking through the results and beginning to analyze them. What does the data tell you? Be as specific as possible. Do you want to know how respondents feel about individual library programs? Do you want to know which programs they like best, in comparison to others? Do you want new ideas for programs?

**Where:** Where will the survey be taken? Will it be handed to patrons of the library when they check out materials, posted on the library’s website, or handed out to teens in homeroom? Consider how each location will affect the amount of time respondents are willing to spend on the survey. It is better to get quality answers to a couple questions than get results that mean little to many questions.

**When:** What is your timeframe for survey completion? Will you post it on the website for a month or ask teachers to have students complete it within a week?

**Why:** What do you plan to do with the survey results? Why are you asking for these answers? Every question should have a valid reason to exist. If there is a question on the survey that cannot be justified, remove it. If you may need it at a later date, save it for a later survey.

**How:** This is often the most difficult part, deciding which question type and phrasing will elicit the answers you are looking for. This is also where all the other planning really pays off. Looking at the examples from the “What” section, you can see how different question phrasing will provide different responses. If you want to know about the feelings toward individual programs, a good question would ask for a rating about each program separately, on some standard scale (0 to 7; very unsatisfied to satisfied). To compare programs, which will not tell how someone feels about a program, but how they feel about a program in comparison to another, list all the programs and have the respondent rank them. If you want new ideas, the best option is to ask for an open-ended response, leaving several lines for respondents to fill in their own answer in their own words.

not only gives them a sense of ownership over the event, but also allows them to generate ideas that resonate with their interests and takes a lot of the guesswork out of the process for librarians.

Whether it is game playing, game design, making music, editing photos and videos, writing, or any other interest, there is a need for computers and software. Instead of focusing on the how, show teens the why. Focus on the end result, such as a completed video, instead of the individual skills needed. For example, a program about game design will teach the smaller skills of programming logic, story design, and searching for help online. A program about game design is likely to draw teens in. However, if the program were advertised as “Learn the logic behind computer programs, story design, and how to search for help online,” there would probably be less interest from your teen patrons.

There may be instances when it is appropriate to offer more specific, basic classes. However, as with any learning situation, it will go better if the teens are engaged and interested in the material. Finding a topic or method of teaching that is interesting to the teens can be difficult but worthwhile if the teens remember more from the lesson after it is completed. Show them how to use Microsoft Publisher to format a comic book. Let them create resumes for their favorite fictional or historical characters in Microsoft Word or one of its equivalents. When teaching classes about a program that teens may not find interesting, it may help to see if you can teach the class in conjunction with a school, either holding the class at the school or finding if there are teachers who will offer extra credit for attending. Also, contact local homeschooling groups to let them know what classes are being offered, as some parents may want their children to learn skills that they themselves do not possess.

Larger Benefits of Using Technology

The end result of engaging programming for teens is what the teens will be able to give back to society as a whole and to the library. Teens who understand technology will have a better chance at excelling in both school and life. While we do not know what will come next in terms of technology, we can be certain that there will be a next thing. If teens understand the technology available today, they will be better prepared to learn and successfully use the technology of tomorrow.

When the teens at your library fully understand the technology they are using, they can teach other patrons who may also be on the wrong side of the digital divide. This could be seniors and other adults who need more help than library staff can provide, other teens who are struggling to grasp technology, or younger patrons who are just being introduced to technology. 

**YALS**
ike all librarians, I believe that everyone deserves a place in the library. It’s one of the things I love most about this profession: our commitment to treat all of our users equally and with respect. That said, I sometimes feel defensive about the path I’ve taken in my career. I decided about halfway through my MLS coursework that I wanted to be a young adult librarian. And, more specifically, I wanted to work with “at-risk” teens . . . whatever that myopic catch-all phrase means. I was asked to interview at a few large urban library systems, where I’d sent my resume right around graduation. But an opportunity came up close to home, and I took it, because it was a pretty amazing job for a 27 year old right out of grad school. I became the director of a small boarding school library, and since then, my jobs have all been similar: teen librarian at a well-funded library in a wealthy community; librarian and academic technologist at a private day school; and currently, library administrator at a girls’ boarding school.

When I was a public librarian, I began to struggle with my professional identity and purpose. In a community where it appeared (emphasis on appeared) that every kid had private tutors, an iPhone, their own car, and a huge house, I couldn’t quite figure out how to enrich my patrons’ lives. I was trying too hard to impress them with fancy programs and not trying hard enough to be a good librarian. I had a hard time talking with the teens, even the ones who served on my advisory board. Their manners were amazing, they were much better at event planning than I was, and certainly they were better dressed.

Before I go any further, I need to be clear about something: this article is not intended to directly compare working in private schools and public schools, or communities with different socioeconomic demographics. After all, I’ve never worked in a public school, or in an economically challenged community. (My own personal background is another story for another day.) This article is only about my own experiences, and about my belief that all teens, no matter what their socioeconomic or social status is, deserve high-quality library services, trusted adults in their lives, and a safe space in their community.

Is it easier to work in a privileged community because of the users? I don’t know for sure. As I said before, I’ve never experienced anything else, so I don’t feel comfortable drawing comparisons. Instead, I’d like to focus on why it’s important for us to meet the needs of those who appear not to have any. And, if you have found yourself in a similar environment and are struggling with how to connect with your users, I have some ideas for you.

When we picture ourselves working with teens in a library, we often forget about those who don’t appear as needy: the popular kids, the athletes, the class presidents. Those teens, we might think, have enough people providing them with resources, support, and learning opportunities. Or maybe they don’t need anyone looking out for them, since they seem to have everything under control.

Often, we have a harder time connecting with these teens. They are usually very good at presenting themselves to others, especially adults. In addition, our own adolescent insecurities can sometimes come out when we work with teens; we’re reminded of how hard it was to talk to the soccer captain when we were 15. I am sometimes intimidated by the popular kids, as embarrassing as that is to admit as a 35 year old.

Maybe this is the dirty secret of teen and school librarianship: when you work with teens, sometimes you feel like a teen. After my stint in public libraries, I returned to a school library and in my first year, when all the students were nice to me, I actually thought they were playing a trick on me. When I finally trusted them, I discovered that they were loving, and kind, and funny. It was those students who made me realize I’d been wrong in how I’d judged, and immature and selfish in how I’d incorrectly viewed myself through their eyes. I’d started to stereotype and write kids off before I even got to know them.

It’s easy to paint all teens with the same
Everyone Deserves a Place in the Library

brush, especially when you only see them a few hours out of the day. We all make judgments based on how people dress, talk, and act. But, of course, it’s the stuff we can’t see that matters.

In all of the libraries I’ve been a part of, I’ve worked with teens from all ends of the socioeconomic strata. My students and patrons have come from a wide range of backgrounds: religious, ethnic, racial, economic, you name it. The more you get to know them, the more this becomes clear. They all share something in common: they attend a great school, or live in a great community. But that doesn’t mean they’re all coming from the same place.

Financial, social, and academic status doesn’t insulate teens from the pressures of life. In my years of experience as a librarian, I’ve encountered bullying, body issues, drug and alcohol abuse, interrelationship abuse, depression, anxiety, self-harm, a whole host of GLBTQ issues, teen pregnancy, divorce—you name it. And she was crying. Why? Katie couldn’t keep it all in, and neither could the soccer captain whose dad was getting remarried. Or the snarky skater kid whose processing delays made it impossible for him to understand what he was reading. Or the girl who came to my school because she’d been hanging out with gang members and drug dealers at her last one.

What do librarians do for our users? We help them understand the world, and if they’re privileged, we help them understand the world outside of that bubble. We teach them how to use information responsibly and ethically. We give them the tools to seek out their own questions and answers. The closer you get to teens, the more you hear and see. In my prior two school jobs, I was often shocked by what my students would disclose to me. (I’ve only been at my current job for a few months, and it usually takes a lot longer to form a bond with students than that.) But also, I’m honored that they trusted me, and grateful for the chance to get them help.

One year, a girl who was not my advisee came into my office and asked to shut the door. She was one of the most, if not the most, popular girls in the junior class. Pretty, well-dressed, shiny hair, a full load of APs, three-varsity athlete, you name it. And she was crying. Why? Because her best friend was ignoring her. She was running a fundraiser and everyone was criticizing the way she was going about it. She’d lost the election for class president. And she couldn’t seem to get an A on anything in her English class. It all came to a head, and this girl cried and cried in my dinky little office, and I just sat there stunned, trying to think of the right thing to say before my instincts kicked in. This girl—let’s call her Katie—was, by all appearances, perfect. She always had things under control. Her smile would light up a room, and she flashed that smile often. Sometimes, when talking to her, it was easy to forget that she was only 17. But Katie was a kid like any other, and she couldn’t handle it all. Hyper-successful kids (and the adults in their lives) hold themselves to unrealistic standards. They’re afraid to falter or show uncertainty or weakness. And because of this, they struggle to manage their stress. Katie couldn’t keep it all in, and neither could the soccer captain whose dad was getting remarried. Or the snarky skater kid whose processing delays made it impossible for him to understand what he was reading. Or the girl who came to my school because she’d been hanging out with gang members and drug dealers at her last one.

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What do librarians do for our users? We help them understand the world, and if they’re privileged, we help them understand the world outside of that bubble. We teach them how to use information responsibly and ethically. We give them the tools to seek out their own questions and answers. The overlookers are sometimes the worst offenders when it comes to lazy research methods and cut-and-paste writing. They want to know what they need to do to pass the class, or get an A. They need a formula, and that formula rarely involves open-ended problem solving. Librarians give teens the skills they need to troubleshoot, to try again, to figure out where to start. In my first library job, at a highly athletic school, I taught 11 post-grad boys—all football or basketball players—in a research seminar. These were kids who had done poorly in public school and who were taking an extra year at a private school to get their grades up, bulk up their stats on the field or the court, and increase their chances of getting into a good college. Many of them had never written a research paper before, or seen MLA, or heard of a works cited page. They didn’t know the difference between quoting and paraphrasing. We started with the basics: topic sentences. Exploring subjects. Writing a thesis statement. Months after graduating—you know where this story is going—one of my students wrote to me and thanked me for what I’d taught him. He’d gone to Fairfield University and actually knew what to do when he’d been assigned his first research paper.

So how do we connect with teens who don’t seem to need connections, or who we don’t know how to talk to? Can we get away with only providing services to the teens we’re most comfortable with? Of course not—any librarian would shoot you a dirty look if you even suggested such a thing. But that doesn’t mean we won’t ever be outside of our comfort zone with privileged teens—and here’s some advice for what to do if you are.

Overserved teens require a specific set of skills. They can be demanding, stressed out, and hypersocial. If you are unused to working with them, it’s natural to want to shut down in their presence. Privileged teens are used to getting what they want, and this can sometimes lead to a difficult relationship between patron and librarian, which is why it’s important to not just take the time to know and understand your teens, but also to make sure you’re maintaining your sense of authority and professionalism.

Put your own insecurities aside, if you have them (and lucky you if you don’t). Teens are people who are forcing themselves into the world, projecting their personalities and their interests and their opinions without discrimination or
subtlety. This can often manifest itself in what some people call “attitude.” It isn’t; it’s testing the waters, pushing against boundaries, and, sometimes, expressing stress, exhaustion, confusion, sadness, or frustration. You are an adult who has a responsibility to try to look beyond these outward behaviors. This means treating teens with respect, but also treating yourself with respect. You have the authority to set behavioral boundaries and uphold standards. Going along with this, it’s important—and this sounds a little pat—to be yourself. When working with outgoing and confident teens, there’s sometimes a temptation to try to impress them, or to resent them for their privilege. You will only connect with them by putting aside those resentments and being genuine. Trying too hard to be someone you’re not is a surefire way to get teens to distrust you.

Give teens time, and give yourself time. Listen to the words behind their words. A guffawing jock may just be trying to get a rise out of you, but I bet if you sit down with him one-on-one and talk, you’ll find something important about him. I got wonderful advice from a fellow teacher when I brought up the topic of responding to rude or aloof teens. My colleague, who had worked in retail, reminded me of something I’d learned while working at the public library. Always assume positive intent. If a teen is rude, bring it up gently. “Is everything OK? Is this helpful? You seem a little frustrated.” This gives your patron a chance to explain what’s going on. They may not intend to come across as frustrated, or they may be having a bad day for reasons that have nothing to do with you. With this age group, every interaction is a chance to model empathy and positive communication. And if you have done a good job setting boundaries, then you’ve created an environment where teens can feel safe talking to you, and you can feel safe engaging in that kind of conversation, too.

Be prepared to modify your services based on your audience. If you spent much of library school or your previous job planning events and activities that appeal to a certain type of teen or student, you may have to change gears. This can be tricky if you’re now trying to plan events that you yourself wouldn’t attend. Ask for help from trusted patrons, and ask for advice from your population as a whole. Set up focus groups, send out polls, connect with teachers or other adults in your community, and see what other agencies are doing for teens. If all of your students are obsessed with Pretty Little Liars but you’re more of a Downton Abbey fan, you may have to bite the bullet and plan a TV marathon and discussion group—and you might need to visit the PLL Wikipedia page to catch up!

Get to know teens as individuals, not members of a clique. Coming down hard on teens before you know them will get you nowhere, so be ready when someone rolls her eyes at you in front of her friends. You’re either going to let it go (because you’re the adult, right), or call her out and be prepared for the consequences. I try to choose the latter, as gently and calmly as I can. Listen, and be patient, and be kind. Just like you would be with any other library user. If you work in a well-off community or school and the teens are using the library, you’re on the path to success. The teens are there—they find value in the library. Be grateful for that, because if you take the time to see teens for who they really are, you will love each and every one of them. YALS
The Mobile LAM (Library, Archive & Museum): New Space for Engagement

By Angela Rovatti-Leonard

In response to technological advances, budgetary issues, and changes in the needs of researchers and patrons, two ideas have become part of discussions in LIS literature: collaboration among libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) and user-centered services. This article focuses on the prospect of combining LAMs and user-centered services, along with collaboration, technology, and user-orientation models to create something new—the Mobile LAM.

What’s a Mobile LAM?
The Mobile LAM would pull together resources (written records and material objects; access to digital collections) from libraries, archives, and museums and then bring them to schools, other educational institutions, and places in communities where teens spend time, in an effort to engage teens with the cultural record, their communities, and to support connected learning. This type of collaboration is possible in a variety of ways: collaboration among local and national libraries, archives and museums; librarians and teachers; teens and donors (those donating materials to repositories); libraries and community businesses, and more. A LIS professional on board the Mobile LAM RV would be responsible for coordinating all aspects of managing the Mobile LAM.

ANGELA ROVATTI-LEONARD, a graduate of Simmons College GSLIS-West Campus in South Hadley, Massachusetts, eagerly seeks opportunities to advocate for and better serve children and teens. Rovatti-Leonard recently assisted the Sunderland Public Library in Massachusetts with an LSTA Teens and Tweens Grant. She previously planned programs for all ages at the Dickinson Memorial Library in Northfield, Massachusetts. She can be reached at angela.rovattileonard@gmail.com.

What does the Mobile LAM look like? Picture an RV bus, customized to create a flexible, connected learning environment, fully equipped to facilitate engagement, using a combination of technology tools, as well as print and digital materials and physical objects. Long tables on either side would hold several laptops for accessing digital collections, for general research, and to support a wide variety of collaborative projects. Laptops and tablets seem ideal for this space since they can easily be tucked away and do not take up much room, allowing visitors plenty of space for group work and for interaction with the available resources. A SmartBoard visible to all on board would allow visitors the ability to view, create, or give presentations. Cabinets above long tables on either side of the RV would safely house and display print materials and physical objects borrowed from LAMs. These items would not necessarily be permanently housed on the RV but could be changed according to the particular needs of the visitors at any given time.

The definition of library (or archive, or museum) is changing. Everything from the services that are provided to whether it lives solely in a bricks-and-mortar building, includes an active interactive digital environment, and/or is mobile and travels to where the community most needs the services provided is under review. Collaboration between LAMs can serve as a vehicle through which LIS professionals can ride the waves of change while remaining relevant and continuing to provide quality services to patrons of all ages. Lisa McGiven and Lianne McTavish describe the challenges and opportunities change presents, highlighting interdisciplinary collaboration:

As digitization projects move forward, as government funding becomes increasingly competitive,
and as individual citizens harness the power of Web 2.0 technologies to engage with cultural organizations in new ways, librarians, archivists, and museologists—whatever they choose to label themselves—must work together toward a common curriculum and common baseline of expert knowledge to gather, manage, and make accessible the vast array of materials in the coming centuries.

Collaboration among LAMs is not a new concept. Given and McTavish provide a specific and early example of the blending of books and objects in the Natural History Society of Montreal created in 1827. An extension of the Society, a museum and library, included written records and material objects that were mutually dependent, one illustrating the other. Scholars would use both scientific books and preserved specimens to expand their understanding of the natural world. In this way, the Mobile LAM offers an environment for expanded understanding, offering students, researchers, and donors fresh kinds of access to various collections of written records and material objects, employing a combination of traditional and innovative methods.

How Technology Fits In
The implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in libraries, archives, and museums, encourages user participation and a way for students, researchers, and donors to interact with the collections in a new way. For example, people can visit an archives website and add comments or crucial information about collections, such as identifying a particular person in a digitized photograph. This kind of interaction between users and collections enriches both the users’ experience as well as enriching the collection itself. The information provided offers another layer of granularity to the collection for the next researcher.

Extending this kind of user participation, the Mobile LAM could bring the library, archives, and museum to students. Similar to class visits to an archive, in which students use primary sources to work on school projects, the Mobile LAM would visit schools or meet students at local historical societies and sites, providing a hands-on, multidisciplinary learning experience.

In addition to meeting students where they are, the Mobile LAM could also meet donors, those donating materials to various collections, especially those who are either unable to get to the various institutions or do not have access to the Internet. In keeping with the collaborative nature and connected learning environment of the Mobile LAM, the opportunity for bringing both students and donors together presents itself. For example, as part of a school project, right on the vehicle high school students could assist donors in scanning their donated documents into databases.

The Mobile LAM would provide support for connected learning, highlighting the idea that learning happens everywhere. In this way, the vehicle could offer support for teens outside of school as well. The space on the RV, with its tech tools and an LIS professional, could also offer an environment that allows teens to make connections between various aspects of their lives: home, school, and peers. Groups in one location could meet with educators or experts located in another part of the country (or another part of the world). For example, a group of teens working on designing a mural for their community center in Connecticut could hear from the artist they’ve been researching, who lives in California, made possible by a Google Hangout, on the Mobile LAM. The librarian borrowed a painting by the artist from a museum in Connecticut (where the artist originally lived) for the teens to view. The teens could ask the artist their questions and get advice and ideas from the artist in real time. Perhaps teens were asked to study various artists as part of a school assignment and their interest was sparked, extending to a project at their community center. In this example, teens, artist, and artwork converge in a way that would most likely not be possible in a regular school or library setting.

Another aspect of connected learning that could be supported on the Mobile LAM is the way in which self-directed learning can be more meaningful. It is much easier for someone to truly engage in a project that is led by one’s own interests or passions rather than a project that is imposed. If the Mobile LAM was strategically placed in a location where teens spend time, such as malls, food places, etc., there could be great potential for them to utilize the tech tools and the space to explore their interests.

Engagement is key to the success of any service or program. A teacher or librarian could have the most wonderful lesson or program planned for teens, yet, if the teens aren’t truly interested, it can be nearly impossible to get them to engage. So what engages teens? Of course the answer can be as diverse as the teens themselves. Middle school teacher Heather Wolpert-Gawron polled students with this very question. From the responses of about 200 students, she found that there were three main themes that reoccurred: “Working with their peers; Working with technology; Connecting the real world to the work we do/project-based learning.” All three of these elements could be explored on the Mobile LAM.

The following example illustrates another possibility for engagement. A LIS professional would be involved as a facilitator or guide rather than as someone
who dictates specifically what kinds of things the teens would do. After talking to the teens, to get an idea of some of the things they are interested in, the LIS professional could set up a makerspace (with materials ranging from craft supplies, to audio/visual equipment, to a 3-D printer). Teens could collaborate, each bringing his or her own strengths to the makerspace, learning from one another. Perhaps nearby adults may be curious about what’s going on and join the makerspace, adding their experience and knowledge. Similarly, the adults may also learn something new from the teens. Whether collaborating or simply working side-by-side, everyone involved in the makerspace could learn and grow.

The Mobile LAM meets at the intersection of preservation and access—preservation of the collections, written records, and material objects, and preservation of the professions of librarians, archivists, and museologists, albeit through a collaborative lens. In an article for the *Harvard Gazette*, Hattie Stroud, a master’s of architecture student working on a project at the Harvard Library Innovation Lab notes, “Now that [the idea of the library] has been so radically destabilized by the Internet, what libraries have to offer is prime space for engagement. The library will best serve its community—academic, social or otherwise—by providing unique experiences.” Even though the site Stroud speaks only to libraries, this could be extended to archives and museums as well.

The Mobile LAM could also provide that space for community engagement with cultural materials and that unique experience that offers a way for library, archives, and museum professionals to remain relevant—through a redefining of their roles—in a rapidly changing environment. In the 2008 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) report, the authors note that their study illustrates how LAMs “by collaborating […] can: support lifelong learning and community development, become partners in a variety of cultural and economic initiatives, enable universal access to information, preserve heritage materials, reach new communities and improve core services.”

Where Are the Models?
A description of some of the similar models that exemplify collaboration among LAMs follows. The Warwickshire Mobile Library Service teamed with the British Museum’s Portable Antiquities Scheme in 2007 to present museum artifacts to mobile library customers (similar to the bookmobile in the United States) in order to promote local archaeology and to introduce customers to local museums and archives services. In 2009, Maria Mortati created the San Francisco Mobile Museum, which included onsite visitor participation and offered a fresh way to engage with the public. The Cleveland Public Library installed a portable reading room downtown in 2012, called a “Book Box,” that offers a small seating area, books for circulation, free wireless access, and laptops for Internet browsing. Food-related books with subjects such as cooking and urban agriculture were chosen for the reading room to complement the nearby one-hundred-year-old food emporium, The West Side Market. More recently (2013) the Colorado Library opened an outpost in a local Kmart. The outpost allows the main library to have a presence in the community without incurring the expense of opening another branch. Visitors can use the 11 computers available, sign-up for a library card, request items through the online catalog, and have those items delivered to the outpost. Some parents appreciate the convenience of being able to drop children (and potentially teens) off at the outpost while they shop. Lastly, the SparkTruck, the vision of a group of Stanford students, combined making, education, and technology and took to the road in an effort to facilitate hands-on learning for students all over the United States. Each of these examples showcases innovative ways of creating user-centered learning environments.

The Mobile LAM, an extension of the previously mentioned models, would include:

- an on-site educator (from a “home-base” institution: library, archive and/or museum)
- wireless access
- laptops for browsing the collections
- cabinets and display cases to secure print and material objects
- space for researchers, students, and donors to access the collections, physical, print and digital, and to interact, create, and learn from one another (i.e., makerspace)
- information pamphlets regarding services offered by local information-based institutions
- low entrance with two small steps
- ramp at the rear for wheelchair users
- temperature control

Conclusion
As the definition of what a library (or archive, or museum) is shifts, LIS professionals can respond by resisting and refusing to embrace change or by recognizing the shift as a catalyst for collaboration of proportions previously unknown. Although the idea of collaboration among LAMs is not new, the notion of combining print and material objects with technology and...
It’s easy to see that Evie doesn’t fit in on the Surface…

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Lorie Ann Grover is an author of YA novels, sometimes told in verse, and board books. Her upcoming release, *Firstborn*, is her first YA fantasy. In order to avoid gendercide, the main character struggles with her life as a declared male for the benefit of society under oppressive rulers.

Q: What do you think the appeal of novels in verse is to teens?

A: Verse is able to carry a lot of emotion in a compressed space. The empty white areas serve as breathers for the reader. What an asset for coming-of-age works which often strive to convey such intensity to teens who are eager to read of it.

I originally wrote *Firstborn* in verse. However, it didn’t work for the story because the fantasy required so much more setting detail which the white spaces didn’t allow.

Q: Is your process for writing verse different than writing prose?

A: No, it’s really the same. I “see” the entire movie in my head before I begin to write. My agent, Elizabeth Harding, will often say after first drafts, “Tell me more of what you see.” And I have to build layer upon layer. As if I am adding clay upon an armature. Versus others who write like they are chiseling away at a marble block to discover their piece.

Q: The theme of family is important in your novels. Why do you choose to write about family?

A: Oh, it is! My first three novels sprang from my own life experiences: my grandmother’s breast cancer, the end of my ballet career, and my father leaving our family the same time the boy in front of me was kidnapped. All of those instances played out within the context of my family.

*Firstborn* is my departure from my personal life. When I read 37 million girls are missing due to China’s One Child Policy, just recently amended, I knew I had to speak for those girls. My voice would carry through one girl and her family. Isn’t it all about family? The one you come from and the one you make by your own choice?


Q: Your first three novels deal with realistic problems. What made you decide to write *Firstborn*, your next book to be published, as a fantasy?

A: Fantasy became a vehicle for me to step away from my own experiences. It helped me to make that transition.

Having read fantasy from childhood, from a middle grade work titled *The Enormous Egg* by Oliver Butterworth to Anne McCaffrey’s *Harper Hall Trilogy*, I always wanted my own egg to hatch and bond with. *Firstborn* gave me that experience.

Also, while I homeschooled my daughters, historical material often surfaced which sparked fantasy ideas such as the Spartan military training of children, the people of Mesa Verde, or the various periods of religious persecution. I knew those stories could underlie and add substance to my imagination.

Q: Can you tell us about your blog, readergirlz (rgz), and why you decided to co-found it?

A: In 2006, after touring and visiting inner city schools for the release of *Nothing but the Truth (and a few white lies)* Justina Chen had a hope for teens who never had the opportunity to engage with an author. She approached local YA authors Janet Lee Carey, Dia Calhoun, and me to utilize brand new social media platforms to do just that. Before we knew it, we had readers speaking to authors around the world, impacting each other daily. It’s wonderful how today that is the norm, with everyone chatting and exchanging ideas through various sites.

The early rgz platform positioned the 33 rgz volunteers as middlemen to connect other nonprofit organizations with publishers. It was a joy to partner with YALSA and drop over 30,000 books into the hands of underserved hospitalized teens and young adults on tribal lands.

Today we continue to support Teen Literature Day by leaving YA books in
public places as a part of Operation Teen Book Drop. The rgz blog acts as our depot for news and recommendations, thanks to YA authors Melissa Walker and Micol Ostow. Who knows what we all might do together tomorrow?

**Q: Which YA authors do you enjoy reading?**

**A: Of course all the rgz volunteers’ works such as Martha Brockenbrough, Holly Cupala, and Mitali Perkins. And those we have featured at our site: Beth Kephart, Deb Caletti, Nikki Grimes, Libba Bray, and Sara Zarr. And the men! John Green, Markus Zusak, M.T. Anderson, and Matthew Quick. I’ll stop there as I could go on and on…**

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**The Mobile LAM (Library, Archive & Museum) (continued from page 18)**

user-centered services offers a fresh and exciting interdisciplinary perspective to the changing vision of LIS professions. The Mobile LAM, as an extension of libraries, archives, and museums, could serve as a new space for engagement. In the spirit of the creators of the SparkTruck, as a recent library school graduate, I’d like to begin my career in youth services—embracing current and emerging technologies—by “driving the change,” using innovative ways to best serve the young people of our communities. [YALS](#)

**References**

A Learning Lab Makes It in St. Paul

By Jennifer Larson

A group of about 40 people squint at a wall full of sticky notes scribbled on with a Sharpie marker, occasionally leaning in to read one closer, occasionally pulling one off the wall and rearranging it into another clump of notes. The conference room is uncharacteristically quiet as this diverse crowd thoughtfully, carefully looks for themes in this mess of scribbles and notes.

This is a group that focuses on innovation, technology, and digital learning, so it may seem strange that they’re relying on paper and ink to take their ideas to the next level. But it works. Themes emerge, teams are formed, and everyone gets down to business.

This is the YOUMedia Network’s Summer Retreat in Welches, Oregon. The participants are all part of a network of libraries and museums granted funding (from the Institute of Museum and Library Services) to start up digital learning labs in their institutions. As financing for the labs comes to a close, the purpose of the retreat is to establish a community of practice and ensure that the network stays intact and organized for ongoing communication and support. It’s a daunting task, establishing a network, but if anyone is up to the task it’s this diverse group of innovative and intelligent people.

Learning Lab, What’s That?
I first heard about YOUMedia when the organization I work for, Saint Paul Public Library, was awarded a grant to develop a library-sponsored learning lab in the community center we are building. (It’s set to open in 2014.) Not very familiar with learning labs prior to this, I was soon enthralled by the “early adopters”—some of the first institutions to open learning labs—as I learned more about what YOUMedia Chicago, ArtLab+ at the Smithsonian, and DreamYard (in the New York City borough of the Bronx) were doing to connect teens with technology and art. These labs were providing teens with access to recording studios, art supplies, makerspaces, video equipment, sewing machines, and more. They provided a safe, teens-only space where they can feel comfortable hanging out, learning, and creating. They provide adult mentors who teach the skills teens want to learn. As a youth services librarian, the more I learned about these learning labs the more excited I became to implement our own version in Saint Paul.

HOMAGO?
Most of the YOUMedia Network of learning labs operate within the HOMAGO guidelines. HOMAGO (Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out) is a learning theory based on research devoted to uncovering how youth learn and interact in their environments—in school, out of school, and in youth programming and spaces offered in libraries and museums. Generally speaking, it focuses on the idea that youth need opportunities to feel comfortable (hanging out) before dipping their toes into an activity (messing around), which can lead to them successfully learning a skill and actually making things (geeking out). It also recognizes that what adults may think of as nonproductive behavior—such as chatting with friends, playing around with their phones, or looking things up online—actually contributes, and sometimes is a necessary part, to the creative learning process for many teens.

As you might expect, HOMAGO can be a tough sell for some of our colleagues, especially ones outside of youth librarianship. If you are running a program on photography, for instance, and a coworker sees a bunch of teens lounging around playing with their phones—and

Jennifer Larson manages the Youth Services Department at Saint Paul Public Library. She earned her MLIS at Saint Catherine University, chairs the library’s Teen Services Team, and is involved in its Createch programming as well as the YOUMedia Network, bringing technology and creativity into the lives of Saint Paul youth. In 2013 she helped develop Saint Paul’s award-winning READ BRAVE initiative, which is a one-book program that encourages youth to respond to the text with media creation and civic involvement.
does not see that what’s going on on their phones includes taking and captioning photos—they might wonder why time and resources are being “wasted” on that program. Getting as many staff as possible to understand HOMAGO is essential for the program to succeed. This has proven to be a challenge for Saint Paul, particularly as it relates to the innovative partnerships we’ve formed. Our main partner in creating the learning lab is our city Parks and Recreation Department. Library and Parks staff will work closely together in the lab facilitating programming, helping teens create digital media, and staffing the space.

Parks and Rec: A Unique Library Partner
Saint Paul Library is unique among the pool of YOUmedia grantees in partnering with our city’s Parks and Recreation Department in planning and implementing our digital learning lab. The new building where our lab will reside is a joint-use facility containing a library, walking track, fitness center, and gymnasium. At all the convenings with the grantees there was at least one person surprised by the fact that the library and Parks Department are partners on this project. Most partnerships in the YOUmedia Network are between museums and libraries. And, to be honest, if someone had told me five years ago I would partner with the Parks Department on this sort of project, I might not have believed it. However, this relationship has truly changed the culture of both our organizations. We now have recreation centers regularly transporting youth to the library so they can participate in our programs. We have librarians bringing iPads into recreation centers and running tech programs there. We collaborate together on projects, such as an all-day Teen Advisory Retreat. It’s a slow process, but we’re coming to understand each other and finding a common ground in serving the youth of Saint Paul. As our library moves away from the role of “book provider” and into a different model of service (for instance, using HOMAGO principles to teach classes in coding for teens), it makes sense that we would work closely with Parks and Recreation. These days I cannot imagine doing youth-serving work without our Parks partnership.

A Pilot to Start
Since the physical space for our learning lab was a couple years from completion when this project started, we decided to implement a pilot project. There were several goals for our pilot: we wanted to learn and practice offering tech programming to teens, we wanted to introduce emerging technology to teens in the form of a mobile lab that could travel from site to site, and we wanted to try a new model of programming—instead of planning isolated events for young adults that may or may not be well attended, we tried offering consistent programming. Thus, we introduced our Createch Labs. In the summer of 2012, we launched, on a consistent schedule, Createch (blending creating and technology) programming at two different library branches and one recreation center. For instance, teen users at the Rondo branch know that every Tuesday from 4 p.m.–6 p.m. Createch takes place.

We started with one mobile lab that traveled between the three Createch locations. It contained five iPads, a set of speakers, headphones, and a MacBook Pro. Today, a little over a year later, we’ve expanded to two mobile labs, each with iPads, a MacBook, sewing machines, a Silhouette CAMEO cutter (electronic cutting machine that plugs into a PC or Mac with a USB cord), and more. This technology allows our staff flexible options for programming at their respective Createch sites. We also added an additional branch library to our Createch rotation.

We found that by offering Createch on a consistent schedule we were getting better attendance for our teen programming. Each week we offered activities involving technology: video poetry, stop motion animation, and so on. Teens could join the activity if they wanted, or they could hang out with their friends, play with an iPad, or read a book. Teen response to the low-pressure programming was consistently positive—the only thing they ever wanted to change was more access to technology. We are constantly trying to catch up to the demand.

Partnerships and Relationships Make It Work
To help us catch up to demand and keep our programming fresh, we established key partnerships within our community. Besides partnering with our Parks Department, we also connected with the Science Museum of Minnesota’s Youth Science Center and Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, a community media center. Both groups intermittently come to our Createch sites with their own youth leaders that develop programming and lead teens through an activity, with library staff developing their own programming on the off weeks. This allows for peer-to-peer mentoring, which we’ve discovered is so important in relationship building. Having someone the same age as a teen teaching skills makes any program much more appealing to the age group. It also helps teens to foster healthy social skills.

Partnerships have been an important component not only in our learning lab project in Saint Paul but across the nation in the YOUmedia Network. It’s a theme that comes up again and
A Learning Lab Makes It in St. Paul

again. Our Createch programs would not be thriving and expanding as they are without our community partners. Establishing these partnerships can be challenging and time consuming, but the payoff is huge. For instance, Saint Paul Neighborhood Network not only brings their high-end videography equipment to the libraries and recreation centers, they also bring adults and youth trained in how to instruct teens on how to use the technology. Pooling our resources means teens have more access to knowledge, technology, and mentors. Our partners get a chance to expand their programming out in the community, as well as take advantage of the library’s resources. Everyone wins, most importantly our youth.

We learned early on in the project that the core of our Createch pilot—and extending into our planning process for the learning lab—is based on relationships. We can spend millions of dollars on the latest technology and digital learning tools, but teens need to feel comfortable, welcomed, and connected to the staff before they consider entering the mobile space. It became apparent quickly that our advertising efforts did not get us more Createch attendees, but having staff that were willing to chat with teens and extend a personal invitation to the program garnered amazing results. You need the right staff to work in these environments. Obviously they have to be comfortable with teens, and they also need on-going training in youth work and adolescent development. They have to have some technology skills and a willingness to explore digital media. They have to be flexible—programming can fall apart, technology can cause issues, and sometimes things just don’t go the way you expect. A sense of humor helps, too.

To help develop skills needed by youth-serving staff, Saint Paul established a professional development component to train library and Parks staff on how to manage our Createch programs, and, eventually, the digital learning lab. A group of staff from Parks and libraries, identified as being skilled in youth work and open to new ideas and creativity, meet weekly. They are called the “Pretzels Team,” so named for their flexibility and “saltiness.” They describe themselves as a community of practitioners who foster innovation, shape attitudes, and reflect on their work. The group has been going for almost eighteen months now, and together they have planned a staff development day, worked on the Createch project, and are planning development for staff of the new joint-use facility, focusing on training them to be effective youth workers that are comfortable working in a new model of service.

Training and Mentoring Required

Training and development for learning lab mentors was a hot topic at our Welches retreat. YOUMedia recognizes the importance of having time to reflect, and how easy it is to forget to include reflection in one’s work. It’s one of the main focuses of the network and why every convening and retreat and gathering of the network is special. There’s an energy that comes from sharing with other people who understand your passions and work. We solve problems together and share ideas. When you build something new and ground breaking in your institution, there are a lot of challenges that come with it. Knowing that you have a network of people doing similar work with a similar vision, even if they are scattered across the nation, and knowing that you have that support can make all the difference. I know it has for me. The YOUMedia Network is a very big, very diverse group of people, including administrators and mentors and program directors. There’s huge value in having so many perspectives in one group.

Mentors are probably the YOUMedia folks who inspire me most. These are the adults working directly with teens, teaching them skills and fostering relationships with the youth. All YOUMedia learning labs have a mentoring program. At YOUMedia Chicago, for instance, they have mentors that teach specific skills, like fashion, videography, and sound recording. Selecting the right mentors can be a tough process, and one that Saint Paul is still exploring. The city hired an AmeriCorps VISTA member to help us navigate the process; we wanted someone who could focus solely on devising a strategy to recruit good mentors and implement a system for maintaining quality mentorship for our teens. It’s a big job.

Working in the YOUMedia Network as I help plan for our Teen Learning Lab (which has yet to be named as our youth are still working on the perfect one) has been one of the highlights of my career as a youth services librarian. Every time I meet with the Network, whether virtually or in person, I leave feeling inspired and powerful. We’re creating something larger than the sum of our individual institutions. We’re transforming how libraries and museums work with teens. We’re constantly bringing connected learning into our spaces and rethinking all our programming. We’re supporting each other and fostering change and growth in ourselves and our organizations. We’re relating in new ways and finding new opportunities for partnerships. As our grants come to a close, we’re just beginning to see how powerful we truly can be. I am proud to be a part of the YOUMedia Nation, and I’m excited to move to the next chapter of our work together.
I often talk about how the Web is a handcrafted community that can only represent the world that we live in when individuals build webpages. In January 2012 I gave a workshop on hacking the Web to YALSA members at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Dallas. There I talked about Mozilla Webmaker (https://webmaker.org/), gave an introduction to HTML and CSS and advocated for learning how to understand, contribute, and code the Web in order to protect it.

Through creation of content and pages on the Web, you can make your mark and be part of the growing global conversation that happens in this space. I was prepared to write this article in the same mind-set—but I feel compelled to tell you a personal story instead and how it changed both my views on coding and life.

Hurricane Sandy
In November 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit New York and devastated—and in many ways destroyed—the community that I grew up in, Rockaway Beach, New York. The day after the storm, I went to my neighborhood and saw that people could not communicate with each other or the world outside Rockaway. Imagine no cell phone usage, no Internet, no power. When I returned home I built a small website, rockawayhelp.com, to give people the information they needed and to create a web of support for families who could not get in touch with their families who were in one way or the other trapped in Rockaway due to the storm. It was this act of webmaking that launched my participation in protecting and rebuilding my physical community. It opened my eyes to how webmaking and understanding what’s “under the hood” of the Web can help build and strengthen community.

The work that I do in the open source community and the open educational resource community as a software designer prepared me to take on this small bit of leadership. Rockawayhelp.com allowed me and my team to coordinate and mobilize volunteers as well as give up-to-date, hyperlocal information on how the people and places in Rockaway were doing after the hurricane. Rockaway Help (this group of volunteers and locals that formed via the website) had an active presence on the physical streets of our community: going into houses, cleaning out basements, connecting people who didn’t know where their family members were, working with the veterans at Team Rubicon (An organization of military veterans who deploy as first responders in natural disasters—http://teamrubiconusa.org/) and the software developers at Palantir. Along with some friends I made via Twitter during the night of the hurricane (who, like me, were all extremely worried about our parents who had decided to not evacuate), we created multiple social media channels. To this day we continue to have active conversations on Facebook and Twitter.

Some of the lessons we learned during the hurricane are the same lessons that you learn every day at libraries or in the open educational resource community. We learned that when you work in the open (more about that in a moment) you can create community. When I was sitting at home worrying if my parents survived the hurricane, I went online and connected with friends and other Rockaway residents. They too were watching the local news and having panic attacks about their homes and families. We shared information, brainstormed ideas, and gave each other the confidence to venture...
back into our community when the storm ended. I was scared, but knew that I had an online community to support me.

This is something that I learned while working at Mozilla: if you work in the open, you can share information and connect to a like-minded community. We do this daily with our webmaker activities, starting with Hackasaurus two years ago.

The Power of Webmaking

Hackasaurus is a suite of tools and curriculum that make it easy for anyone to learn webmaking through remixing HTML and CSS in places that you are already inhabiting on the Web. You can currently explore these offerings by visiting webmaker.org. Hackasaurus was initially launched by two radical librarians, Atul Varma and myself, and then expanded into this massive OER (Open Education Resource) that people immediately responded to. (Now this content is hosted on webmaker.org.) Why did they respond to it? Because we blogged, shared free resources, and created content as a group—failing, iterating, and improving publicly.

How does this connect to libraries? Many youth have their only out-of-school exposure to the Internet at the library, so instead of having a consumption-level relationship with content on the Web, libraries have the opportunity to help youth become makers and have agency in shaping this powerful platform.

In a disaster situation like Rockaway, a lot of things needed to be done and I quickly realized that I was not able to do it all. For the website effort, we leveraged the digital strategy agency Blue State Digital who kindly volunteered with us and helped us to set up a database, an effort led by Matt Kelley. Additionally, we had some good bloggers and other volunteers who were on the ground and could give us up-to-the-minute info to communicate out. And when we got those volunteers, we quickly learned that it was going to be very difficult to efficiently organize 1000-plus people in one day, so we partnered with Team Rubicon who had systems in place and an established plan. This is common in media making and coding: you start a project and then get a collaborator (or collaborators) to take on parts to take your work up a level.

Doing software design, I usually throw out an idea, test it with various users, figure out what parts of it work and what parts don’t work, and then build on the idea to make a new prototype. It’s messy, but it works because you get your concept out there in the hands of real users. We were constantly doing this at Rockawayhelp. We really had never dealt with disaster relief before, so we had to be comfortable with trying things out, failing a little, and building more efficient ways of doing things.

An example of this was that we first found ourselves standing in front of the local church, collecting addresses for people who needed help and then assigning them to crews of volunteers. We quickly learned that this wasn’t the most efficient way to organize our efforts, because we were too few people to get everything done—so we streamlined the system by creating forms through the website.

We found that maintaining involvement from volunteers was a challenge, so we designed a badge system using the Mozilla Open Badges—openbadges.org—infrastructure. Badges allowed us to recognize those who were already involved and acknowledge expertise. Expertise during this emergency response could be anything from being a documentarian to really knowing how to shovel muck out of a garage. Also, creating a system for motivation, tracking progress and expertise is simply practical in that it helps match volunteers with a certain skill or expertise with those that need it the most.

More recently, we hosted a bunch of hack jams in conjunction with the National Day of Civic Hacking, where these were sessions not run by engineers, but rather by designers and technology-minded folks and local community members. The goal of these events was to crowdsource community during the rebuilding process. Initially community members came up with a few distinct areas to focus their work: emergency response and prep, rebuilding, maintaining community integrity, and web literacy.

A Handcrafted Community

The Web is known as being a powerful resource and search tool, but unlike traditional sources, the Web is designed as a handcrafted community—by users for users. So if you aren’t making your mark on the Web for your community, someone else is going to do it for you. Here is your opportunity to inform the thinking, literature, and research on your world.

With very little movement, you could literally become an activist—it’s powerful. One way to maintain your community integrity is to create content and websites for your community. Rockaway is not just a community that was devastated by a hurricane, but rather a kickass, fun-loving beach town. We can use the Web to show this and not just through social media, but through collaborative webmaking. Many locals wanted to learn how to do just that. In essence they were interested in “rebranding” their community. Given their passion and a specific goal in mind, learning to code was the necessary step to do what they felt that they needed to do. We used the Mozilla X-Ray Goggles, a bookmarklet that enables you to remix
webpages and more advanced users dabbled with Thimble, which is a web-based code editor that is kind of like bumper bowling for people learning to code.

Coding is a life skill. Kind of like swimming, you might not learn it in the classroom, but it’s one of those things that you are learning out of school, in libraries, at home, with your friends—it’s personal and informative. You can easily get started by tinkering with sites like Mozilla Webmaker or, for more formal instruction, check out www.codeschool.com. Think about places in your library where technology can help to build community or change the way that your community is looked at and encourage blended learning. One way to do this is to hold a thematic hack jam or learn to code club. For example, in the New York Public Library, teens used the X-Ray Goggles to remix their branch webpage to make it more personal and reflect local interests. Finally, think about ways to maintain community through technology by instituting a badge system through Open Badges.

Creating an online community through code and design can help support communities offline in surprising ways. Learning can start in community spaces like libraries or in the middle of the night of a hurricane. Webmaking is personal—it’s handcrafted and provides you with a canvas to share your very local story with a global community. Learning to code is a very small action that you can take that will ultimately transform your relationship with the Web from consumption to civic engagement. YALS

“A realistic fiction piece that should enjoy broad appeal, particularly among younger teens... Both male and female readers should find Keil’s book a satisfying read.”

—YOYA

“Camilla is like a John Green girl with slightly less angst...”

—The Horn Book Magazine

“An unabashed celebration of high school romance... Readers will enjoy the school story plot and the romance elements, and fellow geeks will appreciate Sam’s wry commentary on high school culture through a constant stream of cult film references.”

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Badges: Show What You Know

By Sheryl Grant

Badges for learning are digital credentials that recognize a person’s skills and achievements.1 We often associate credentials with degrees or diplomas, but credential means a “fact, qualification, achievement, quality, or feature used as a recommendation or form of identification.”2 In other words, credentials provide a way to vouch that we are who we say we are, and have the qualities we claim to have. Traditional credentials like degrees are critical to meaningful employment, and yet when we find ourselves vying with 200 other candidates for a single job, we begin the age-old practice of stuffing up our resumes. We may add a list of skills like HTML, CSS, Microsoft Excel, or Dreamweaver. We add work experiences that hopefully convey our leadership qualities, our project management skills, and our ability to connect with youth. After we land the job, credentials start to go stale, so we update our resumes with lines of text about new things we can do. Digital badges do the same thing as credentials, but they do a little more. To unpack what badges for learning can do and why they matter, consider where they come from.

In 2011, Secretary Arne Duncan of the U.S. Department of Education introduced digital badges to a national audience for the first time. During a live-streamed event in Washington, D.C., Duncan told a crowd, “Badges can help speed the shift from credentials that simply measure seat time, to ones that more accurately measure competency.”3 Together with the MacArthur Foundation, government agencies, corporations, and nonprofit organizations, Secretary Duncan launched the “Badges for Lifelong Learning” initiative and started a national conversation about learning, assessment, and opportunity, the core of what digital badges represent. “Today’s technology-enabled, information-rich, deeply interconnected world means learning not only can—but should—happen anywhere, anytime. We need to recognize these experiences, whether the environments are physical or online, and whether learning takes place in schools, colleges, or adult education centers, or in afterschool, workplace, military, or community settings. In short, we must begin to see schools, colleges, and classrooms as central points—though still very important ones—in larger networks of learning.”4

Learning does happen anywhere, anytime, but recognition of that learning does not. The learning we do in museums, libraries, and on the Web can and does enrich us, but the knowledge and skills we gain are rarely recognized. Badges for learning are designed to change that.

Why Badges?

In the “technology-enabled, information-rich, deeply interconnected world” that Duncan describes, badges are found in peer networks and game environments that pervade our highly social Web. Predating the Internet, badges were used to signal rank and membership within a group, whether literally a cloth or figuratively evoked to symbolize the status, achievement, reputation, or membership within a social class.5 Badges provided social proof for desired attributes, and functioned as both incentive and reward while rapidly conveying important information about identity. In today’s networked digital environment, badges function the same way, whether in video games or social media marketing campaigns. Today, they do all that and more, as tokens that represent goal setting, instruction, and reputation.6 As the Internet evolves into a seemingly limitless site of learning, new forms of assessment have emerged, driven largely by the tools and social practices we use to rate, rank, recognize, and reward the contributions and participation of others online.

Assessment, a form of evaluation we often equate with school, is actually an “integral part of all human learning” that arises whenever social groups seek ways to mentor and police participants.7 We tend to think of assessment as something that happens in classrooms and on tests because school is traditionally where

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learning gets counted. Our networked, connected, technology-mediated world says otherwise. Assessment, like learning, in fact happens anywhere, anytime, online and offline, inside and outside the classroom, throughout our lives. Mentors, experts, and peers assess us both formally and informally, and whether we learn in school or out, we are evaluated against national, organizational, and industry standards. Badges are the connectors, the pieces that link this learning, assessment, and opportunity together across all parts of our lives.

Digital badge advocates claim that by validating a range of skills and achievements not currently assessed in traditional K-20 schooling, and by doing so in a way that also validates more granular skills, badges can meet needs not currently being met.8 In Open Badges for Lifelong Learning, a white paper coauthored by the Mozilla Foundation and Peer-to-Peer University, a group of learners experience “a problem in making their knowledge and skills visible and consequential in terms that are recognized by formal educational institutions and broader career ecosystems.”9 These learner composites are intended to reflect how people acquire career-ready skills and knowledge in the 21st century, whether that learning is assessed through experts, computers, or peers, and whether it takes place inside or outside school.

Learning and Badges

Our 20th century model of education is based on the “assumption that teaching is necessary for learning to occur,” and yet digital technologies have made it possible for us to learn anywhere, anytime, teacher or no teacher.10 As a result, how we learn in the 21st century is shifting from “issues of authoritativeness to issues of credibility, and within this changing context of learning and online participation, digital badges are gaining traction, not only as viable credentials, but as relevant and useful ways to recognize skills and knowledge.”11 For youth, this issue of authoritativeness and credibility is even more acute, due to the “culture gap between educational systems designed in the industrial age and the emerging learning practices of the knowledge age.”12 Many young adults are immersed in mediated activities that revolve around games, photography, music, apps, print, television, image, video, and voice and text communication. This mediated environment is rich with learning experiences that expand and diversify meaningful life pathways, connecting youth to new opportunities. Badges have the potential to make this learning count in ways that traditional credentials have not.

In response to the Badges for Lifelong Learning initiative, organizations are designing systems that integrate badges into their learning content. The net effect of emerging badge systems is a marketplace of credentials that are no longer tethered predominantly to schools and universities. Many of these nontraditional learning institutions are issuing credentials for the first time, building digital badge systems that have the potential to change the way their learners issue, display, and share credentials with others online. If badges become synonymous with credibility and transparency, nontraditional institutions of learning could end up validating the kind of interest-based learning and peer assessment that schools are slow to recognize.

Schools and the Web have one thing in common: a fundamental drive to increase participation. Most schools use a combination of punishments and rewards to motivate learners. On the Web, a mix of social, mobile, and immediacy motivates people to participate. In 2006, Internet researchers estimated that only 1 percent of people on the Internet contribute content, 9 percent edit, and the rest consume what others produce.14 We can see that much of the online innovation in the past decade has focused on technology for deeper social participation, with reading and contributing on one end of the spectrum, to collaborating and leading on the far end.15 Reading content, tagging photos, rating contributions, editing wikis, sharing videos, posting blogs, producing webinars, or developing open-source software—we are learning.

Assessment and Badges

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Badges: Show What You Know

doing, making, and contributing massive amounts of online content. One surprising engine driving this collective activity is social assessment. Interest-based social participation has exploded in the last fifteen years, and so have new ways of assessing each other, whether through voting, ranking, commenting, or other forms of peer feedback.\textsuperscript{15}

eBay implemented one of the earliest, most successful examples of peer-to-peer evaluation that allowed buyers to rate sellers. Since then, similar systems have proliferated, including peer ratings of reviews and comments (\textit{The New York Times}), voting on the quality of questions and answers (Stack Overflow, Quora), and recommending the expertise and merits of colleagues (LinkedIn). Engaging in peer assessment is its own form of participation, and in systems like Amazon, individuals can vote on the quality of comments left by others. Nothing inspires feedback more than commenting on someone’s expertise.\textsuperscript{16} The same is true about commenting on someone’s values.\textsuperscript{17} While research on badges is still in its infancy, some studies show interesting results. On Wikipedia, researchers found that contributions increased by 60 percent after editors were awarded badges.\textsuperscript{18} All of this activity is visible and easy to count. Community size, page views, downloads, and temporal patterns measure participation, and clicking, viewing, tagging, rating, posting, uploading, commenting, editing, and other types of contributions have become easy metrics to track.\textsuperscript{19} There is no shortage of things to count online, and no paucity of metrics for measuring. The only thing lacking is a standardized, credible way to recognize and share what we know, across all of the contexts where learning occurs.

What Is a Badge?
A badge is an image file with information in it. Compare that to a traditional credential, which exists separate from the proof of learning associated with it. By the time we see someone’s degree, the criteria and evidence for how it was earned is long gone. Badges, however, are transparent and information rich. Everything is bundled into one click, so we can see what someone did to earn the credential, including a link to the evidence behind the learning, maybe a testimonial from the instructor, or an official endorsement from a third party. Some badges have an expiration date to signal that the skill needs to be renewed each year. The ability to click badges and view relevant information about a learner’s skills and knowledge adds a layer of trust to credentials that is more than a technological flourish. Developing a highly credible way to authenticate what someone knows challenges the existing system, and raises profound questions about what credentials mean and who decides what counts. If digital badges “challenge the monopoly on credentialing held by conventional degree-granting institutions,” and nontraditional learning institutions can decide what counts, what does credentialing look like in the future?\textsuperscript{20}

Here is what it looks like today.
We progress through classes and grade levels after demonstrating satisfactory performance on exams and other criteria. After successful completion of course requirements, we accumulate credentials in the form of diplomas, certificates, or degrees. Schools and universities issue our credentials by handing them out on stage or sending them by mail, and the most common way we display them is to add a line of text to our transcript or resume. In a digital badge world, those lines of text are displayed as badges that we share on websites, social media platforms, and mobile devices. For skills we want to demonstrate with greater granularity, badges will provide that additional layer of proof.

What does badge proof mean? Technically, a digital badge is a PNG file embedded or “baked” with JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) data that conforms to a set of standard technical specifications. Each badge contains user identity information in the form of an e-mail address, as well as a set of metadata that includes the badge description, issuer, issue date, evidence URL, image, and additional information required to make the badge fully portable so that it can be displayed anywhere on the Web. This metadata is what makes digital badges information rich and portable, and without it, institutions could issue badges, but there would be no “badge ecosystem” of systems to recognize the badges. In other words, badges would exist only within the institutional technical systems that issued them and lack the information-rich, transparent, and portable features that set them apart. Badges can be “hosted,” which means that the badges live at a stable URL to show that the badge exists, and is hosted by the issuing institution. Badges can also be “signed,” which is a way for a third party to endorse a badge. Professional organizations could endorse badges that meet certain criteria, and add an additional layer of validity.

Mozilla, developers of the open-source Firefox browser, are responsible for the Open Badges Infrastructure (OBI), the set of standard metadata specs that connect digital badges across the Web. For digital badges to work within an ecosystem where organizations can issue them, earners can display them, and institutions can recognize them, badges must contain standard technical specs that are hard-coded into the badge. The OBI includes both the open technical specifications referenced above and the badge “backpack” or repository, a central place online where people can collect, manage, and display their badges. An individual who earns a badge issued from an institution must then
“push” this badge to the backpack, and from there, can “pull” the badges to other OBI-compatible systems on the Web.

Empirical research about badge systems is limited; even so, a growing number of nontraditional and traditional institutions of learning are interested in building digital badge systems even before fully functioning use cases have been deployed and evaluated. While the intellectual and technological scaffolding for a robust badge ecosystem is still new, the momentum and interest around badges is taking off (Figure 1). In 2012, the Humanities, Arts, Sciences, Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC) awarded $2 million in funding to 30 organizations to build badge system platforms. Microsoft, Intel, NASA, the Smithsonian, University of California–Davis, the Adams 50 School District in Colorado, Girl Scouts, 4-H, YALSA, and other major organizations are only some of the groups launching badge systems. In 2013, hundreds of cities, universities, corporations, schools, and professional organizations signed on to the 2 Million Better Futures (www.2MBetterFutures.org) badge commitment launched by the MacArthur Foundation at Clinton Global Initiative, and Chicago announced it will host its second citywide Summer of Learning badge program next year after a successful first pilot in 2013.

Digital technologies like badges have the potential to become a “default mode of social ordering.”20 We know that badges intersect with powerful social and technical systems, especially during the first quarter of our lives when our chief preoccupation is admission to and graduation from college.21 They also answer a social need not currently being addressed. Traditional credentials issued by universities and schools do not recognize all the learning that happens, nor do they teach and recognize many of the skills employers might value. Badges are a “good enough” solution to cause the kind of systemic social change that fundamentally changes the institutions that teach and employ us.22 The extent of that change, though, depends on how organizations design their badge systems and the choices they make about learning and assessment. It is true that not all badge systems will transform the status quo, but an open marketplace of digital badges may change how we communicate who we are and what we know to others, and that could have far-reaching consequences. Badge systems have the potential to select what kind of learning gets counted, where and how that learning occurs, who assesses it, and how. If choices we make while designing new technologies influence the way we associate with one another and the sociotechnical systems in which we function, then digital badges may become the catalyst that validates new norms for learning, assessment, and opportunity.23 YALS

References and Notes

1. Badges have also been referred to as “micro-credentials,” “achievements,” and “open badges.” For consistency, the terminology used in this article is “digital badges” or “badges.”
Badges: Show What You Know


10. Doug Thomas and John Seely Brown, A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change. Publisher: authors.


It’s clear that teens and young adults today are operating in a different technological environment than previous generations, but the impact this environment is having on their relationship to libraries is less certain.

Many public library staff members have told the Pew Research Center’s Internet Project that they want to build connections with younger patrons but often have difficulty maintaining these connections as the youth age. We find some evidence of this in our research. For instance, even though older teens (ages 16–17) are one of the age groups most likely to have used a public library in the past year, more than a third of recent library users in the next older age group (ages 18–24) say their library use has decreased within the past five years. And younger respondents in general are less likely than older adults to say that libraries are important to them and their families.

Teen and Social Media

We also know that social media is an important, and growing, part of teens’ digital experiences, but the landscape has shifted in recent years. Among teen Internet users, 81 percent use social networking sites. Some 94 percent of teen social media users say they have an account on Facebook. Moreover, Twitter use is on the rise: 24 percent of online teens use Twitter as of September 2012, up from 16 percent in 2011.

Though Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform and a central part of many teens’ social lives, its popularity can also be a downside. In focus groups, many teens complained about the increasing adult presence on Facebook (including parents and school administrators), as well as “oversharing” and “drama” among their peers; some are turning to less popular services such as Twitter, Instagram, or Tumblr to carve out a small niche for themselves, in addition to maintaining a presence on Facebook.

“I think Facebook can be fun, but also it’s drama central,” a 14-year-old in one of our focus groups said. “On Facebook, people imply things and say things, even just by a like, that they wouldn’t say in real life.” A 16-year-old described her approach to the various social media platforms she uses: “I think Twitter is more open. I like having the ability to have my own little space on Facebook...”

The Technology in Teens’ Lives

An overwhelming 95 percent of teens ages 12–17 use the Internet as of September 2012. Most teens (78 percent) now have a cell phone, though fewer (37 percent) own a smartphone specifically.

Overall, about three in four (74 percent) teens are “mobile Internet users” who say they access the Internet on cell phones, tablets, and other mobile devices at least occasionally. Yet while many teens have a variety of Internet-connected devices in their lives, the cell phone has become the primary means by which many of them access the Internet. In fact, 50 percent of teen smartphone users say they use the Internet mostly with their phone.

While cell phones and smartphones tend to be “owned” by a teen personally, adoption rates of other devices, such as e-readers or tablets, might instead reflect shared household use. For instance, even though 93 percent of teens have a computer or access to one at home, 71 percent say that the computer they use most often is one that they share with their parents, siblings, or other members of their family.

It’s worth noting that even with all of these screens, teens’ reading habits are still grounded in print. Some 90 percent of 16–17-year-olds read at least one book in 2012, with 85 percent reading at least one book in print, making them more likely to have done so than any other age groups. Meanwhile, just 25 percent of these older teens read an e-book in that time.

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Learning outlets this way: "Instagram is mostly for pictures. Twitter is mostly for just saying what you are thinking. Facebook is both of them combined so you have to give a little bit of each... I posted more pictures on Instagram than on Facebook. Twitter is more natural."

Public Libraries in Teens’ Lives

Our research has found that younger Americans’ usage of public libraries includes a blend of traditional and technological services. Looking broadly at the activities of Americans ages 16–29, for instance, we found that these younger Americans are just as likely as older adults to have visited a public library in person in the past year. Once there, younger patrons borrow printed books and browse the shelves at similar rates as older patrons. In many ways, public libraries play a larger role in younger readers’ universes than for older adults. For instance, readers ages 16–17 are more likely than older patrons to have borrowed the last book they read from the library (37 percent) than they are to have purchased it (26 percent), a pattern that is reversed for older readers. And 36 percent of 16–17-year-olds get reading recommendations from a library or librarian, significantly more than older age groups. Most younger Americans under 30 also say it’s “very important” for libraries to provide books to the community.

Yet even as they use and value traditional library services, younger Americans are also interested in various new technologies at libraries. Younger patrons are more likely than older patrons to access the library’s Internet or computers. For instance, and three-quarters of Americans under 30 say it is “very important” for public libraries to provide free Internet access to their communities. Though relatively few patrons borrow e-books (about 5 percent of all recent library users have borrowed an e-book from the library), awareness is an issue for all age groups: 57 percent of Americans do not know if their local public library lends out e-books, including 53 percent of those under age 30.

Additionally, one of the most fascinating findings in our research was that young people are especially likely to value libraries as physical spaces. Some 60 percent of patrons ages 16–29 say they go to the library as a general gathering space (to study, sit and read, or watch or listen to media), significantly more than older patrons (See Figure 1).

Learn More: Teen Gadget Ownership

Among American teens ages 12–17:

- 93% of teens have a computer or have access to one at home. 71% of teens with home computer access say the laptop or desktop they use most often is one they share with other family members.
- 78% of teens now have a cell phone. This includes the 37% of teens who have smartphones (up from just 23% in 2011).
- 23% of teens have a tablet computer, a level comparable to the general adult population.


Student Research in the Digital Age

In a survey and in focus groups we conducted last year among Advanced Placement (AP) and National Writing Project (NWP) teachers, we explored the degree to which the Internet and other digital technologies are shaping the way today’s middle and high school students “do research.”

Most educators agreed that the Internet and digital tools have had
a generally positive impact on their students’ research habits. Yet these teachers, who instruct some of the most academically successful middle and high school students in the United States, also observed many mixed effects. Our findings may best be summarized by something a teacher said in one of our focus groups: “The Internet makes doing research easier. Easier to do well and easier to do poorly.”

For instance, most teachers strongly agreed that the Internet “enables students to find and use resources that would otherwise not be available to them,” and many added that for motivated students, the Internet can offer previously unheard-of opportunities. “Students are often in a rush,” one NWP teacher said. “However, when they are on to something that they are really keen on the chances of them being able to go deep increases dramatically.”

Yet sifting through all this information requires a much more sophisticated understanding of how to read and vet a source, a skill that many said students had not yet developed. In a focus group, one NWP teacher said, “I think research has gotten paradoxically simpler and more complex for students and everyone. It is so easy to find basic information on nearly any subject. However, there is enormous difficulty finding signals amid all the noise.”

At the heart of these teachers’ ambivalence is the unmediated nature of the Internet. Instead of searching for sources within a pre-approved set of resources, such as at a school library, or otherwise limited to the scope of published books and journals. This, teachers say, can be a blessing and a curse. As one NWP teacher said in a focus group, “availability and access to quality resources has never been greater, but it requires even more skill in filtering and sorting. This is an area where students and others have always struggled. It is labor intensive and always requires a growing understanding of the topic and field, which evolves over time.” 83 percent of teachers agree that the amount of information available online today is simply overwhelming for most students.

When we asked teachers how likely their students would be to use various resources, 94 percent said their students would be “very likely” to turn to Google or another search engine, with Wikipedia close behind at 75 percent (as shown in Figure 2). Less than one in five teachers said they expected their students to turn to textbooks (18 percent), online databases (17 percent), or research librarians (16 percent).

Most of the AP and NWP teachers surveyed strongly agreed that “search engines have conditioned students to expect to be able to find information quickly and easily.” One instructor said, “It kills me to see students typing in whole questions [such as] ‘What does it mean to leave a digital footprint on today’s society?’ into Google. The funny thing is they actually get disappointed when it doesn’t spit back an answer.”

Teaching Online Skills

Though students need to learn digital research skills, teachers say there are no easy answers for how to teach them. Overall, 80 percent of teachers said they spend class time discussing how to assess the reliability of online information, though fewer spend time helping students improve their search queries (57 percent) or discuss how search engines work (35 percent).

Many teachers in our focus groups said they relied on their school’s English department to help students develop research skills, with some saying they did not feel qualified to teach many skills themselves. But other teachers said that digital research skills need to be taught by all teachers across the curriculum—and that library staff can be a key part of that process.

Teachers, pressed for time, employ a variety of methods, such as requiring a mix of offline and online sources. Some
In another approach, some teachers said they require students to conduct their online research using only particular sites; nine in 10 teachers in our survey said they direct their students to specific online resources that they feel are most appropriate for a particular assignment. An instructor at a College Board school told us that due to time constraints, “rather than risk them going out and finding the wrong information ... you give them five sources and you say, ‘These are the approved sources. Do not go outside this realm.’” An AP teacher added, “The biggest challenge in any AP class in my experience is time. The volume and depth of the material is so extensive that finding the time to teach effective research is very difficult.”

Some teachers searched for ways to make the process more relevant to students’ interests. “I find fun material and they have to determine if it is credible or not and why,” one NWP teacher said. “I also teach this with visual literacy and we explore doctored images, etc. I love pulling an image of a website that states that something happened to their favorite celebrity. They debate what is true and how to find the truth.”

Several public library staff members we spoke with in a separate piece of research echoed many of these findings, saying they often encountered confusion among both high school and college students over how to conduct research online. In some cases, students who were required to use non-Internet sources were unsure whether journal articles accessed via an online databases would be considered an “online source” by their instructors. “Their teachers say, ‘No Internet resources. You can’t use the Internet,’” one librarian said in a focus group. “You want to say, ‘But this isn’t really the Internet. It’s not what your teacher meant’” (See Figure 3).

Overall, 91 percent of teachers agreed that being able to judge the quality of information is an “essential” skill in order for students to succeed in the future. Beyond students’ need to do research for school or work, teachers cited a variety of areas where “digital literacy” of all sorts will be increasingly important.

One NWP teacher felt that today’s students are operating in a more complex environment than previous generations—and need more help: “I would say that our students are asked to digest much more information than I ever was. That’s got to be tough. It’s tough to know which information to read deeply, which site will offer credible sources … If anything, schools are slower to respond to the needs of students now than they were in the past. Maybe, this is why it is perceived that today’s students are lagging behind those of the past.”

Another teacher added, “If as educators, we do not accept the responsibility to teach our students the skills to navigate messages, information, multiple identities, and other demands that these technologies place on our youth, future generations will certainly fail to meet the current demands.”

We have heard these same concerns echoed by public library staff, many of whom are calling on libraries to help patrons master the new tools for navigating all types of information. “Public libraries should be about educating the public to survive in today’s world,” one staff member wrote. “That involves not only the basic literacy that comes with books, but also a digital literacy to interact with the government and economy as it becomes increasingly paperless.”

There seems to be a clear opportunity for libraries to help Americans of all ages navigate these complex digital resources. Adults already go to the Internet to help answer important or sensitive questions. 72 percent of online adults have looked online for health information within the past year, and 77 percent of them say they began their last session at a search engine (compared with 13 percent who say they began at a site that specializes in health information such as WebMD). Like teens, they generally feel confident with their abilities, with 91 percent of search engine users saying they always or most
of the time find the information they are seeking when they use search engines. 9

Many librarians told us that they wished more patrons knew about libraries’ databases and what they are capable of. “I don’t think we make use of our subscription databases nearly as much as we could,” one wrote. “Instead of seeing ourselves as diminishing in importance because of the ‘digital divide,’ we should see ourselves as important links to help patrons navigate the overwhelming sources of information out there.”

“We should be guides,” one librarian wrote. “If you are going into the information jungle of the World Wide Web and publications and databases and online books today, you need a guide. Someone who is familiar with the territory who can point you to the information and resources you seek. You need a guide; you need a librarian.” YALS

References
2. Ibid.
Find the latest YALSA news every Friday at the YALSA Blog, http://yalsa.ala.org/blog.

2014 YA Literature Symposium—New Dates!

Due to a change in availability at the hotel, YALSA has moved the dates of the 2014 YA Literature Symposium. The new dates are Nov. 14–16, 2014. Please note that the location stays the same, the Hyatt Regency in Austin, TX. We do apologize for any inconvenience, and as a gesture of goodwill we have re-negotiated our contract with the hotel so that the nightly room rate is reduced from $129 to $124, all attendees will get a 50% parking discount and there will be free Internet access in the meeting and hotel rooms. To learn more about the Symposium, please visit www.ala.org/yalitsymposium. The preliminary program will be posted on that site by Feb. 1st. We hope to see you in Austin for this great event!

Announcing Free E-Learning for YALSA Members!

Beginning Jan. 1, 2014, all live webinars from YALSA are now a members’ only benefit. That means all personal members of YALSA can sign up for these webinars and take them at no cost. For easy webinar access, each month we’ll include a link to a registration page in the YALSA e-news. There are 100 spots in each live webinar that are assigned on a first come first serve basis. Every member will be able to access the recording of the webinars in the For Members Only section of the YALSA web site within 48 hours of the live session. Live webinars will no longer be available to nonmembers. However, nonmembers can continue to purchase archived sessions for $19. For more information, visit www.ala.org/yalsa/webinars. If you are not receiving YALSA’s weekly e-news? Please contact Letitia Smith at lsmith@ala.org or 312.280.4390.

“Promote the Best of the Best @ your library”

As this issue mails, YALSA will be announcing its award winners at the Youth Media Awards at ALA’s Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia. The announcement will take place Jan. 27. In addition, YALSA will announce its selected book and media lists for 2014.

Beginning in February, visit www.ala.org/yalsa/best to find downloadable tools to promote winners at your library, part of YALSA’s Best of the Best! You’ll be able to download customizable bookmarks featuring the winners of the 2014 Alex, Edwards, Morris, Nonfiction, Odyssey, and Printz Awards. We’ll also offer press releases, which you can customize and send to local publications to let teens know that award winners are available at your library. You can also download logos to use on your website or in marketing materials in your library, spine labels to apply to titles that appear in the Best of the Best, and other tools to promote the awards, as well as the Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults, Best Fiction for Young Adults, Fabulous Films for Young Adults, Great Graphic Novels for Teens, Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults, and Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers.

So check it out at www.ala.org/yalsa/best!

“The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action”

As part of the year-long National Forum on Libraries and Teens effort, YALSA has released a report, “The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action.” The report provides direction on how libraries need to adapt and change to meet the needs of 21st century teens. Visit www.ala.org/yaforum to download the report and executive summary today.

With funding from a 2012 grant awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Forum on Libraries and Teens provided an opportunity for the library community to join other youth-development organizations to engage in a conversation about how the library community can better meet the needs of adolescents in a time of diminishing resources and rapid demographic and technological change.

The report is a call to action for the library community. It provides recommendations on how libraries must address challenges and re-envision their teen services in order to meet the needs of their individual communities and to collectively ensure that the nation’s 40+ million teens develop the skills they need to be productive citizens. By acting on this call, the library community can work within their own local communities to create the kind of spaces, services, and opportunities that
today’s teens need in order to succeed in school and in life.

As the report points out, now is the time for public and school libraries to join with other key stakeholders and take action to help address the issues that negatively impact teens, and ultimately the future of the nation. Today’s 40+ million adolescents face an increasing array of social issues, barriers, and challenges that many of them are unable to overcome on their own. With nearly 7,000 teens dropping out of high school per day, the nation is in danger of losing an entire generation, which in turn will lead to a shortage of skilled workers and engaged citizens.

“The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action” was written and edited for YALSA by Linda W. Braun, Maureen L. Hartman, Sandra Hughes-Hassell, and Kafi Kumasi with contributions from Beth Yoke. It was adopted by the YALSA Board of Directors on December 16, 2013.

To learn more about the project visit www.ala.org/yaforum.

Join YALSA at ALA Annual Conference!

Early bird registration ends March 3rd.

YALSA has big plans for Annual 2014—be part of the action in Las Vegas this summer, June 26–July 1.

There are plenty of interesting programs and ticketed events to attend, including Teen Spaces 201: What’s Next for Teen Spaces in Libraries, the Odyssey Award Presentation and Program, Energizing Teen Creativity by Letting Go, Sci Fi for Librarians Who Don’t Like Sci Fi, YA Author Coffee Klatch, and Dynamic Duos: Collaboration between School and Public Library Systems. For more detailed information on all YALSA has to offer at Annual 2014, visit www.ala.org/ yalsa/events.

Early bird registration ends March 3rd. Find more details about registration and housing at the ALA Annual Web site, www.alaannual.org. For the latest details on YALSA’s Annual schedule, visit the YALSA Events page at www.ala.org/yalsa/events.

Official 2013 Teens’ Top Ten titles announced

YALSA has announced the official 2013 Teens’ Top Ten titles. Voting for the 2013 Teens’ Top Ten took place from Aug. 15 through Teen Read Week, Oct. 13–19, with more than 32,000 votes cast. This year, there were 28 nominees that competed for the “top ten” list. The official 2013 Teens’ Top Ten titles can be found below and are also featured in a video announcement at http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teens-top-ten/. The official 2013 Teens’ Top Ten titles are as follows:

1. “Code Name Verity” by Elizabeth Wein (Disney/Hyperion)
3. “Insurgent” by Veronica Roth (Harper Collins/Katherine Tegen Books)
4. “Pushing the Limits” by Katie McGarry (Harlequin Teen)
5. “Poison Princess” by Kresley Cole (Simon & Schuster)
7. “Crewel” by Gennifer Albin (Macmillan/Farrar Straus Giroux)
8. “Every Day” by David Levithan (Random House/Alfred A. Knopf)
9. “Kill Me Softly” by Sarah Cross (Egmont)
10. “Butter” by Erin Jade Lange (Bloomsbury)

The Teens’ Top Ten is a “teen choice” list, with teens nominating and choosing their favorite books of the previous year. Nominations are members of teen book groups in 16 school and public libraries around the country. Nominations are posted on Celebrate Teen Literature Day during National Library Week and teens across the country vote on their favorite titles between August and October. For more information about the Teens’ Top Ten, please visit http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teens-top-ten.

Have Fun While Building Your Professional Skills!

Update your skills, get leadership and networking opportunities, be a part of moving YALSA forward and have a great time by joining one of our strategic committees! President-Elect Chris Shoemaker will be appointing committee members to 2014–2016 strategic committees that help the association advance its mission and the profession. Interested in being more involved? Read on to find out how.

A Guide to Strategic Committees

YALSA has two types of committees: selection committees, which select specific library materials or choose YALSA’s awards and strategic committees (previously called process committees), which help carry out the work of the association. Strategic committees include:

JURIES
- Books for Teens Jury
- BWI/YALSA Collection Development Grant Jury
- Conference Travel Scholarships Jury
- Frances Henne/VOYA/YALSA Research Grant Jury
- Great Books Giveaway Jury
- MAE Award for Best Literature Program for Teens Jury
- Volunteers of the Year Award Jury
- Writing Award Jury

BOARDS
- Continuing Education Advisory Board
- JRLYA Advisory Board
- Publications Advisory Board
- The Hub Advisory Board
- Website Advisory Board
- YALS Editorial Advisory Board
- YALSBlog Advisory Board

COMMITTEES & TASKFORCES
- Division and Membership Promotion Committee
- Financial Advancement Committee
- Joint School/Public Library Cooperation Committee
- Legislation Committee
- Annual Conference Marketing & Local Arrangements Taskforce (seeking members in the San Francisco area)
- Organization and Bylaws Committee
- Research Committee
Before you volunteer to serve on a committee, advisory board or jury, you’ll want to learn what the group 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 chairs are available at www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsaalacontacts.

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

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

Applications will be accepted through March 1st, and once submitted you should look for an email confirmation from YALSA. Appointments will be made by the President-Elect in March and April 2014. Please do not expect to hear from Chris Shoemaker before March. For updates on the appointments process, check the YALSAblog. If appointed, your term begins July 1, 2014.

All of YALSA’s strategic committees are virtual appointments, meaning you do not need to attend the Annual Conference or Midwinter Meeting to serve on a committee. Appointments are two-year terms for advisory boards and committees, and one year terms for juries. Some groups are very popular and may receive dozens of volunteer forms for just two or three available spots. Your membership in YALSA must be current in order for you to be eligible to serve on a committee or jury.

Questions? Please contact Chris Shoemaker, YALSA’s President-Elect, at cinf0master@gmail.com or YALSA’s Membership Coordinator, Letitia Smith, at lsmith@ala.org.

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

YALSA has chosen Dolly Goyal as its 2014 Emerging Leader. Goyal will receive funding to attend ALA’s Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference in 2014. YALSA’s participation in the Emerging Leaders program is funded through the Friends of YALSA (FOY), which since 2005 has provided more than $100,000 in member awards, grants, stipends and scholarships.

Goyal is a teen services librarian at the San Mateo County Library—Belmont Library in California. In addition to her YALSA/ALA members, Goyal is a member of the California Library Association, REFORMA and the Bay Area Young Adult Librarians.

The ALA has selected 56 people to participate in its 2014 class of Emerging Leaders. The program is designed to enable library staff and information workers to participate in project planning workgroups; network with peers; gain an inside look into ALA structure and have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity early in their careers.

The program kicks off with a day-long session during the 2014 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia, and includes orientation and training. The program will then continue in an online learning and networking environment for six months, culminating with a poster session with the Emerging Leaders showcasing the results of their project planning work at Annual Conference in Las Vegas. Participants commit to taking part in all aspects of the program and may have an opportunity to serve on an ALA, division, chapter, round table or affiliate committee or workgroup upon completion of program.
Understanding Teen Behavior for a Positive Library Experience & Strengthening Teen Services through Technology Instructional Kits Now Available!

YALSA's training kits take the work out of putting on a workshop! Each kit provides ready-to-use training materials, including PowerPoint presentations, a script and step-by-step group activities. Trainers can adapt them for their audience, or use as-is. Each kit is broken into several modules, that can work as stand-alone mini-sessions, or they can be presented together as a full day of training. The Understanding Teen Behavior for a Positive Library Experience kit focuses on helping all library workers gain the knowledge and skills they need to have successful interactions with teen patrons. The Teens and Technology kit provides a wealth of information to help library workers keep up to date on how best to integrate technology into programs and services. Visit www.ala.org/yalsa/young-adults-deserve-best to view free demos, place your order or learn more!

Cost: $175 for digital download; $199 for paper edition with CD containing PowerPoint presentations (binder-ready, three-hole punched and tabbed). For 20% off orders of 25 or more, mention code YUTB12 for Understanding Teen Behavior and code YTEC12 for Strengthening Teen Services through Technology.

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