

YALSA Board of Directors Meeting  
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Seattle  
January 25 – 29, 2013

**Topic:** Reaching Library Administrators

**Background:** Recent reports as well as anecdotal evidence points to an erosion in support of teen services by library administrators. This includes layoffs of teen services staff, cutbacks to budgets for teen collections and presentations by administrators that reveal a lack of understanding of the value that teen services brings to the library and the community it serves. This erosion of support negatively and directly impacts YALSA's mission to expand and strengthen library services for teens. In an effort to improve administrative support for teen services in public libraries, and therefore make gains toward achieving YALSA's mission, the YALSA Board will want to actively implement activities that help administrators understand the value of services to teens in public libraries. Linda Braun has presented some information for the board's consideration.

**Action Required:** Discussion

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### What's the Issue

In an era when budgets are tight and libraries are struggling to define their place in the community, it can be easy for teen services to be left out of library strategic and financial planning. While many libraries are moving forward with projects such as learning labs and other programs targeted to teens, the latest statistics from the Public Library Association show that full-time staffing for teens has decreased dramatically between 2008 and 2012. While 51% of PLDS survey respondents reported in 2008 having at least one full time staff person dedicated to teen services, that number dropped sharply to 33% in 2012. Additionally, the number of school librarians in the U.S. shrank by 7% from 2004 to 2011.

A decrease in staffing for teen services at a time when libraries are re-thinking their role in the community means that teen services will be less prominent in any new library models that emerge and that in the majority of communities teens will continue to be underserved. Administrators may be working under a variety of inaccurate assumptions. They may

- See teens as a population that is served by other community organizations and institutions.
- Think that teens don't really want or need library services
- Assume that once teens reach adulthood they will return to the library, even if they weren't served when teens.
- Assume that any teens that do use the library can be easily served by librarian generalists or paraprofessionals.

- Not be fully aware that teens have unique needs that cannot be adequately served by children's or adult services.
- Be underestimating the number of teens that are living in their community.

### **What needs to be done**

Library administrators need opportunities to learn about the value of teen services in public libraries and to apply that knowledge to management, budgeting, strategic planning, etc. It is essential that these opportunities resonate with the audience of administrators and this will require that YALSA try new tactics in order to achieve the goal. The information presented to administrators needs to come from a library administrator's point of view and has to demonstrate a return on investment that is hard to ignore.

As this matter is a large and possible complex issue, in order to be successful in making strides towards greater administrator support for teen services, a multi-pronged approach is most likely needed. Some possible ways in which YALSA may work to reach the goal include:

- Building stronger ties with other divisions of ALA that connect with library administrators, such as LLAMA and PLA.
- Expanding ties with other associations, businesses, and organizations to which library administrators are active, such as the Urban Library Council.
- Working with library associations, publishers, and organizations that provide professional development to library administrators. This includes state and regional networks and associations, state libraries, grant funding agencies, Web Junction and events such as the Library Journal Leadership Institute.
- Connecting with library administrators that strongly support teen services and collaborate on projects in order to better present the value of teen services from the administrator's point of view.
- Connecting with library schools to build teen services into classes focused on administration of public libraries and to encourage research that clearly demonstrates the value of teen services.

The connections forged with these groups may include collaborative activities such as:

- Gathering data from library administrators about their needs and perceptions of teen services.
- Articles in journals and blogs published for the administrator audience.
- Collaboration on professional development activities.
- Targeted dissemination of YALSA white papers and guidelines with cover letters signed by supportive administrators.
- Development of resources specifically geared to administrators that are developed jointly by YALSA and supportive public library administrative staff.

- The creation of an award that recognizes administrators that demonstrate outstanding support of teen services.
- Other?

### **Possible Next Steps**

The YALSA Board will want to consider which is the best option for moving forward with projects that target library administrators. Possible actions include:

- Create a joint task force made up of members of YALSA, LLAMA and PLA to survey the library community about administrative support of teen services and use the data collected to develop a plan of action for better connecting with administrators and getting the teen services message out successfully.
- Work with the YALSA Program Officer for Continuing Education to connect with organizations that provide professional development to administrators to plan and implement CE that expands administrators' knowledge of teen services.
- Work with the YALSA Communications Manager to make connections with other association journal and blog editors to place articles in those publications.
- Target library administrators already demonstrating support of teen services and work with them to develop content - from articles, to blog posts to cover letters - that help to articulate the value of teen services.
- Send out targeted email blasts to administrators with information about YALSA white papers and national standards. Include a cover letter, signed by a library administrator, that explains the value of services.
- Target directly to administrators the white paper and other materials created from findings of the National Forum on Libraries and Teens. Connect with administrators taking part in forum activities and ask them to help YALSA better gain buy-in from their administrative peers.
- Create tip sheets, infographics, and advocacy materials specifically for administrators that demonstrate the value of teen services to the library and the community.
- Identify YALSA members who are administrators and tap them to help with the creation of messages and materials.
- Compile existing, create new (as needed) and disseminate tools, and help YALSA members understand the need to better articulate the value of teen services to their administrators.
- Update YALSA's existing advocacy toolkit.
- Other?

### **Additional resources**

PLA Data Services Statistical Report  
<http://www.ala.org/pla/publications/plds>

YALSA White Papers

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/whitepapers/whitepapers>

YALSA National Guidelines

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines>