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Case Studies:

Real-World Examples of How Libraries Are Re-Envisioning Teen Services

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The following case studies are real-world examples of how libraries are re-envisioning teen services based on the ideas and recommendations expressed in YALSA's report, *The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action*.

The executive summary of the report can be found at the end of this document and the full report, along with supplemental resources can be accessed at **www.ala.org/yaforum**.

A New Vision for a New Teen Space

Jessi Snow
Boston Public Library (MA)

What Did You Want to Achieve?

To create a space, now called Teen Central, that reflects the interests and needs of teens in the community. We worked to create a space with a focus on HOMAGO; for hanging out (lots of chairs and couches), messing around (a gaming lounge with three gaming systems for teens to access and consume games/media, programs to participate in, and to mess around with) and geeking out (the Lab, a digital makerspace for teens to create, learn, and collaborate).

Overview of the Program/Project

A year before the new space opened, we worked to outline the vision of the space. We started by building a survey that teens completed as a way to help us shape programming.

The survey was given to teens a year before the new space opened, and they were asked how, why, and when they use the Central Library. We also asked them to rank in order of importance and interest the type of programs they were interested in participating in, including the following: college readiness, job readiness (résumé workshops, interview skills), music creation, technology (3-D creation, engineering, music creation, coding, etc.), craft programs, and teen leadership programs. The programs that were ranked the highest were job readiness, college preparedness, and technology programming.

The space opened in February 2015, and since its opening, teen engagement at the Central Library has skyrocketed.

What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

None of this happened overnight or even in just a year. It's taken time and continues to take time. One of the big challenges has been in defining the Lab (digital makerspace) and really having teens understand the intent of the space and then use it as intended. We focus programs in the Lab based on the research from the Futures Report and from direct input from teens. We identified some innovative programs that teens have expressed interest in, developed a curriculum of programs based on the Futures Report, and continue to bring in outside organizations of professionals and organizations that specialize in coding,

music creation, graphic design, 3-D design and making; however, we haven't really been reaching those teens who need and want this type of program. We are really trying to connect with outside organizations and schools that work with underserved teens to try to identify their needs for technology programs and then develop a curriculum that works to support those needs. We are looking at different ways to try to serve those who need it, whether it's in the library or outside the walls of the library.

What Did You Learn?

We completely rethought how we present our programs and now think about them in ways so that they address introducing teens to twenty-first-century digital literacy skills, provide them with exposure to possible careers, and introduce them to actual careers. We are working more closely with community partners in order to achieve this. And we make sure to talk with teens about ways in which skills learned are transferable and the ways they can include them in their résumés and in job interviews.

How Does This Work Connect to YALSA's Futures Report and Vision?

All of the staff in Teen Central were asked to read the YALSA Futures Report on their own and then met as a team to discuss areas of importance and pieces to focus on for Teen Central. As a result, we now focus on these Futures-related areas:

- Programming based on input from teens and a connected-learning focus.

- Outreach that is consistent, deliberate, and purposeful.

- Programs that focus on career readiness.

"We are really trying to connect with outside organizations and schools that work with underserved teens to try to identify their needs for technology programs and then develop a curriculum that works to support those needs. We are looking at different ways to try to serve those who need it, whether it's in the library or outside the walls of the library."

IDEA Lab Tech Team Internship

Monnee Tong
San Diego Public Library (CA)

What Did You Want to Achieve?

The goal of the IDEA Lab Tech Team Internship is to teach new technology skills to teens and help them to cement those skills by having the opportunity to teach their peers. As the program progresses, our hope is to connect the interns to the greater professional community to help them realize their interests can turn into career opportunities.

Overview of the Program/Project

The IDEA Lab Tech Team Internship is a teen internship program at San Diego Central Library. It was developed for e3 Civic High students, the charter school that is housed in the same building as the library. Teens who are a part of the IDEA Lab Tech Team develop twenty-first-century skills by receiving training from community partner Media Arts Center San Diego. As a result of this training and opportunity to create content, since 2014 the teens have created

- four videos;

- fifteen workshops for peers (including introductory workshops on iMovie, GarageBand, and Photoshop, as well as on how to use a drawing tablet);

- the exhibit *Citizens of Central*, a spin-off of *Humans of New York*, that focuses on Central Library staff;

- a coloring book with scenes from downtown San Diego.

What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

Absenteeism and keeping teens on track to complete their projects have been challenging. Our first year was the most challenging, because the expectations weren't clear enough for the teens. After that first year, I had a meeting with each intern and outlined the expectations we had for them. We had the teens sign contracts that stated they were committed to completing the program.

What Did You Learn?

So much! We learned that over time the interns slowly took ownership of the IDEA Lab and wanted to see it succeed. We also learned that the teens found the soft skills they learned from the internship just as valuable as the technology skills they acquired. When asked what they remember most about being an intern, many of them commented on some aspect of teamwork or collaboration.

How Does This Work Connect to YALSA's Futures Report and Vision?

We are inspired by connected learning, which is outlined in *The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action*. We use connected learning as a guide to how we approach teen services. In that type of library, staff become active participants in teen learning by being connectors, mentors, and cheerleaders.

The IDEA Lab Tech Team Internship is an example of how we've incorporated connected learning. The program provides a safe space for self-directed, interest-driven learning for students who may not have had the chance to explore new skills or future career options without it. We've moved beyond being a place to simply check out books by providing a place where teens can create, be engaged, discover and learn, or simply hang out. It's essential that librarians are there for teens, not only to assist them with their information needs, but to be their guides in making the connection between what sparks their interests and future careers.

> "The IDEA Lab prepared me for the real world because I have to work with other people to get a project done."

> "We've moved beyond being a place to simply check books out by providing a place where teens can create, be engaged, discover and learn, or simply hang out."

Implementing Connected Learning and Twenty-First-Century Skill Development in Programming

Adrienne Strock
Nashville Public Library (TN)

What Did You Want to Achieve?

At Nashville Public Library, staff are being intentional about incorporating connected learning and the development of twenty-first-century skills into program planning and design. This is important so we can offer teens leadership opportunities, take their interests to heart when planning programs, become more production-centered, and help them grow into adults who will be successful in life.

Overview of the Program/Project

I led staff through an all-day professional development training that focused on many of the concepts outlined in the Futures Report such as connected learning, mentoring, HOMAGO (Hanging Out, Messing Around, Geeking Out), and twenty-first-century skill development. During this training, I introduced staff to the program planning and reflection sheets I had developed. I followed up with staff as necessary to ensure they understood and were applying the concepts to program design.

What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

I think that the greatest challenge was introducing the concepts to a brand-new team of staff and facilitating a shift into planning programs that are designed around specific outcomes. Staff submit monthly program planning and reflection sheets so that they can be intentional in the design and planning of programs. The sheets also demonstrate how deeply staff understand the concepts and how well they are applying the concepts to program design.

What Did You Learn?

If staff are excited about the evolution of teen services in libraries, then there are more opportunities to think differently about what programming can look like in twenty-first-century libraries. Staff went through growing pains but are committed to learning to adapt programs based on teen interests and to develop production-centered activities that engage teens.

How Does This Work Connect to YALSA's Futures Report and Vision?

Twenty-first-century skill development and connected learning are at the core of the Nashville Public Library's Main Library Teen Center. Staff have embraced the concepts and continue to work with teens to design programs that draw teens to them.

Nina NeSmith, a Teen Services Specialist at the Library, stated it this way:

"The application of twenty-first-century skill development is very helpful in allowing me to have a goal for what I want teens to take out of programming. I am able to identify soft skills that teens need to develop in adulthood, thus developing skills for job readiness and life. For instance, in the program I created and facilitated in the fall called Mission Makeover, I focused on skills essential in professional development and job readiness like dress and grooming, how to create a résumé, and proper interview etiquette. It also presented the perfect opportunity to incorporate connected learning principles so that the teens had tangible products that could be used in both the present and future. Teens were able to choose interview attire from a 'boutique' created through donations from library staff and peers. They even got to model their ensembles in a fashion show. The teens also created résumés, made soaps, and created 'professional' hairstyles throughout the program series. Using twenty-first-century skills along with a sprinkling of connected learning is an awesome recipe for creating quality programming for the teens we serve."

Digital Storytelling

Kate Pickett & Megan Mascorro-Jackson
Johnson County Library (KS)

What Did You Want to Achieve?

We had several educational objectives. We focused on helping students to

- Explore telling their own stories using their own voice.

- Gain an understanding of the language used by Shakespeare. If you can gain command over language, you can do anything.

- Experience theater as a vehicle for social change, and learn to be agents for their own change.

- See connections in storytelling from Shakespeare to modern writing for stage and screen.

- Create digital stories to keep as evidence of skills learned.

- Write a monologue to keep as evidence of skills learned.

- Attend a play at a regional theater with an opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions of playwright and actors after the show.

Overview of the Program/Project

In a partnership between Olathe School District, the Kansas City Repertory Theater, and the Johnson County Library, we offered a seven-week course for students at the Foundations juvenile detention center. The course gave students the chance to explore storytelling in multiple forms from the printed word to live theater production. Students explored Shakespeare, saw a performance of *Sticky Traps*—the most recent play by playwright Nathan Jackson—and investigated a variety of modern storytelling techniques. Participants learned to express themselves, understand the value of a story and words, and had the opportunity to become agents for change in their community.

What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

Probably the biggest challenge was bringing technology into a secure facility. Luckily, we didn't have to fight much of the sometimes common battle related to the potential for metal laptops to be used as weapons. The school purchased laptops earlier in the year, so they were on site already. However, detention center staff were very concerned about students being able to access the Internet. We worked out a compromise where the laptops were locked down with as much security as possible. We also promised that library staff would be with the students and laptops at all times: at no time would we allow students to use the laptops unsupervised. Also, because of the fluctuating nature of their population, we needed to make each piece of the project easy to consume, so someone could easily jump in on the project and not feel like they couldn't catch up. We had 5–8 new students over the course of the seven-week unit.

What Did You Learn?

We learned a lot. First, orchestrating a program with multiple partners is tough! If we thought managing a library schedule was difficult, try managing to work with theater staff, public school teachers, and corrections staff so as to achieve one goal—sometimes communication felt futile. But it all turned out well and ultimately brought a richer experience to the students.

We learned that we didn't know as much as we thought we did. We went in feeling pretty comfortable with podcasting and stop-motion animation, but ultimately, by giving students time to mess around and show us what they discovered, we learned more from them than we would ever have been able to teach.

And we learned that project-based, interest-driven learning takes a lot of time. We had to dedicate a lot of staff time to making the tools available to students (since as I mentioned before we couldn't leave the students alone with the laptops). For a public library that (like many others) is strapped for capacity, it was a big investment, but it really paid off.

How Does This Work Connect to YALSA's Futures Report and Vision?

This project is connected to several components of the Futures Report. These include:

- A focus on multiple literacies. Students engaged with this project were able to improve skills in digital and print-based literacies.
- Giving students the opportunity to engage in real-life experiences through interaction with a playwright and actors.
- Developing relationships and partnerships with multiple community agencies. Through our work with a local school district, a juvenile detention center, and a theater, we were able to support the academic and personal interest needs of youth.

HackHealth

Christie Kodama, Beth St. Jean, & Mega Subramaniam
*University of Maryland College of Information Studies*

What Did You Want to Achieve?

The central focus of the program is to help young adults investigate their own health interests, whether it is information they personally need, information for a family member, or information they want simply out of curiosity. At the end of the program, young adults (and their parents) attend a closing party at the University of Maryland and demonstrate what they have learned through a presentation in the media of their choice.

Overview of the Program/Project

At the beginning of the HackHealth program, young adults are asked to choose a health topic of personal relevance and interest. They spend time creating research questions that they want to explore and answer related to their topic of interest; learn about choosing good search terms to help them find useful, relevant, and credible information about their health topic online, as well as in their school's available databases and print collections; and explore various modalities they may want to use to present what they learned about their chosen health topic to others.
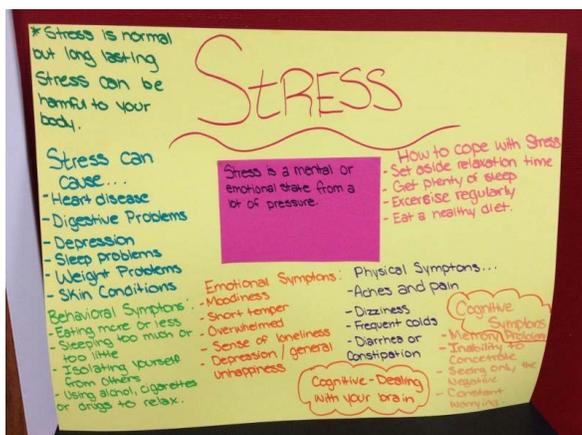
To help young adults improve their information literacy skills, several lessons are taught that help them learn about the research process, how to navigate through a search engine results page, and how to read a URL/web address. In HackHealth, young adults get to think more critically about the websites they have visited and will visit for information on health topics. During each weekly session, young adults spend time putting what they learn immediately into practice by searching for information on their specific health topics, taking notes on what they find, and organizing that information in a clear way to be presented to others.

At the end of the HackHealth program, young adults bring together everything they learned about their health topic into a presentation. These presentations have ranged from classic PowerPoint slides on sports injuries and brain cancer and Prezi presentations on asthma and breast cancer to more unique forms of presentation including an interpretive dance on Kawasaki disease, a play describing a girl with sickle cell anemia, and remixing the lyrics of a Taylor Swift song to talk about thyroid disease.

> "It gives [my daughter] the push more. She's always told me that she wants to be a pediatrician. . . . Being enlightened, being exposed to the experience has given her the courage to pursue that."

What Challenges Did You Face and How Did You Overcome Them?

Retention: Because HackHealth took place after school, it had to compete with other after-school activities and programs. In order to make sure we attracted as many students as possible and maintained their interest throughout the program, we made our activities highly interactive and did the more engaging and exciting activities early on in the program.

Continue to have fun: We learned which activities are more appealing to young adults as we offered the program at successive schools. For example, we learned that one particular method of taking notes (Cornell note-taking) was not favored by the young adults with whom we worked, so we had to change it to another method (VIP note-taking).

What Did You Learn?

We learned to be adaptive. Working with young adults in schools can pose some interesting challenges. Snow days, testing, and varying school schedules kept the HackHealth team (and the librarians and young adults) on our toes. It seemed like each week we were modifying some aspect of the week's activity to fit in with unexpected events.

We learned to take advantage of the fact that young adults are motivated by their personal interests. Enabling young adults to choose their own health topics, their own mode of presentation, and what resources (web and print) they wanted to use was a powerful motivator for teens to take ownership and responsibility for their own research and learning.

We learned that the skills the young adults learned in HackHealth have broader impacts on how they seek information in other contexts. After completing HackHealth, young adults felt like they were "experts" at searching online and felt confident they could find the relevant and credible information they need in and out of school. In her follow-up interview, Chocolate Rain (a pseudonym) affirmed that her skills used to find health-related information have improved. She stated, "Now when I research things, I actually stop and think about what sources (dot-org, dot-gov, dot-com) should I trust? [She now thinks], 'Should I check to see what other sites have the same information?' "

We learned that the skills the young adults learned in HackHealth allowed them to be information intermediaries for their families. They felt confident that they could use these newfound skills to help their families and friends to find information. Star Wars, for example, said that she would not recommend to her family members that they look online for health information because, as she explained, ". . . my family is very . . . They don't know if it's reliable or not and they'll . . . You know how people just read something and they're like, 'Oh my god, that's true!' and I'm like 'Oh my god, that's not true!' and then they're stuck doing stupid rituals like 'Oh my god, let me put something on my head!' I was like 'Mmm, is this what the world has come to?' Yes, it has!"

How Does This Work Connect to YALSA's Futures Report and Vision?

As a way to support *media literacy skills*, for their final presentations, young adults are encouraged to try new and different ways to present on a topic. This unstructured and informal learning environment leads to their willingness to create something using a tool they have not used in the past (such as creating a digital comic with ToonDoo or a glog on Glogster). *Connected learning* is also called out in the Futures Report, and HackHealth taps into the things that young adults are already excited to learn about.

In many cases, young adults choose to research health conditions that they have (e.g., asthma, Kawasaki disease, sickle cell anemia, Type I diabetes) or that one of their family members has (e.g., foot pain, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, cancer).

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

www.ala.org/yaforum/project-report

Libraries provide a lifeline for teens, their families and communities across the nation by providing a safe and supervised space for adolescents to engage in creative, educational activities with caring adults and mentors. But a variety of significant developments point to a need for libraries to change in order to successfully meet the needs of today's teens.

The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: a Call to Action, is the result of a yearlong national forum conducted by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) in 2013, with funding provided by the Institute of Museum and Library services. The Call to Action lays out a new path for serving 21st century teens through libraries. This 2014 report shows that many libraries are continuing to grapple with diminishing resources while at the same time struggling to meet the needs of a changing teen population. Additionally, significant developments in technology have led to the need to rethink how services for and with teens are best created and delivered. The Call to Action 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.

The Issues

Teens Make Up a Significant Portion of Library Users

There are over 40 million adolescents, aged 12–17, living in the United States today, and they use libraries. A 2013 Pew survey found that 72% of 16- to 17-year-olds had used a public library in 2012.

Library Services and Resources for Teens Are in Jeopardy

Library closures, reduced hours, lack of staff, and insufficient resources mean that teens in many communities no longer have access to the resources, knowledge, and services they need to support their academic, emotional, and social development, to master 21st-century skills, and to ensure that they become productive citizens.

There Has Been a Significant Shift in the Demographics of Teens

According to an analysis of the 2010 census data completed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, there are currently 74.2 million children under the age of eighteen in the United States; 46% of them are children of color. Additionally, more than one-fifth of America's children are immigrants or children of immigrants. Now is the time for the field of librarianship, the population of which is overwhelmingly Caucasian, to consider what these demographic changes mean to school and public library services and programs for and with teens.

Technology Continues to Impact Communication Methods, Teaching, and Learning

Teens' use of technology (smart phones, tablets, laptops, the Internet, etc.) is pervasive. However, ownership of technology devices continues to vary across socioeconomic and racial demographics. Now is the time for public and school libraries to

systematically determine how technology will affect the future of library services for and with teens, with special attention to the access gaps that continue to exist.

Teens Are Entering the Workforce without Critical Skills

In the last three decades, the skills required for young adults to succeed in the workforce have changed drastically, but the skills emphasized in schools have not kept up with these changes. Libraries need to create the kind of spaces, services, and opportunities that today's teens need in order to succeed in school and in life.

The Paradigm Shift and Libraries

Several important factors have come together in such a way that libraries are experiencing a seismic shift. Ever since computers entered library spaces, public and school libraries have been on a precipice of change. The library can no longer be viewed as a quiet place to connect to physical content. Instead it needs to evolve into a place, physical and virtual, where individuals can learn how to connect and use all types of resources, from physical books to apps to experts in a local, regional, or national community. Libraries must leverage new technologies and become kitchens for "mixing resources" in order to empower teens to build skills, develop understanding, create and share, and overcome adversity. In addition to the impact of new technologies, the definition of literacy has expanded beyond the cognitive ability to read and write, to a recognition that literacy is a social act that involves basic modes of participating in the world. New research also points to a concept of connected learning, in which studies show that young people learn best when that learning is connected to their passions, desires, and interests.

What Teens Need from Libraries

Bridge the growing digital and knowledge divide: School and public libraries must ensure that in addition to providing access to digital tools, that they also provide formal and informal opportunities for teens to learn to use them in meaningful and authentic ways.

Leverage Teens' Motivation to Learn: Too often teens' desire to learn is thwarted by an educational system too focused on testing, unwilling to adopt culturally relevant pedagogy, or so strapped for funding that only basic resources are available. Libraries live outside of a school's formal academic achievement sphere and offer a space where interest based learning can occur in a risk-free environment. Public and school libraries, therefore, need to embrace their role as both formal and informal learning spaces.

Provide Workforce Development Training: In order to address the growing need for a skilled workforce, school and public libraries have the responsibility to enable teens to learn in relevant, real world 21st century contexts.

Serve as the Connector between Teens and other Community Agencies: Libraries are only one of many organizations with a vision to build better futures for teens. Too often, however, teens are unaware of the services offered in their communities. As many of today's teens are faced with serious social and economic challenges, libraries must provide teens the assistance they need.

Implications for Libraries

In order to meet the needs of today's teens and to continue to provide value to their communities, libraries need to revisit their fundamental structure, including these components:

Audience: the focus is on serving all teens in the community, not just those who are regular users of the physical library space

Collections: are tailored to meet the unique needs of the teens in the particular community they serve, and are expanded to include digital resources as well as experts and mentors

Space: a flexible physical library space that allows for teens to work on a variety of projects with each other and adult mentors to create and share content. Virtual spaces also allow for teens to connect with each other and with experts. Libraries recognize that teens need and want to make use of the entire library space or site, not just a designated teen area.

Programming: programs occur year-round, leverage the unique attributes of libraries, allow for teens to gain skills through exploration of their interests and measure outcomes in terms of knowledge gained or skills learned.

Staffing: Degreed library professionals focus on developing and managing teen services at the programmatic level, while face-to-face encounters are made up of a hybrid of staff and skilled volunteers who act as mentors, coaches, and connectors

Youth participation: is integrated throughout the teen services program and enables teens to provide both on-the-fly and structured feedback for the library staff. Teen participation is not limited to formally organized groups

Outreach: is on-going and occurs in order to identify the needs of teens in the community and then work with partners to alleviate those needs.

Policy: focuses on serving teens no matter where they are. The policies are flexible and easy to update in order to reflect changing needs

Professional development: Takes a whole library/whole school approach to planning, delivering and evaluating teen services. Investigates attributes and resources unique to libraries and identifies means for leveraging those to achieve library goals.

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, and approximately 40% of high school graduates not proficient in traditional literacy skills, the nation is in danger of losing an entire generation, which in turn will lead to a shortage of skilled workers and engaged citizens. Now is the time for public and school libraries to join with other key stakeholders and take action to help solve the issues and problems that negatively impact teens, and ultimately the future of the nation. These challenges are not insurmountable. It is a moral imperative for libraries to leverage their skills and resources to effect positive change and better the lives of millions of teens. In turn, libraries will be providing an invaluable service to their community and position themselves as an indispensable community resource.

"Our teens' interests and needs are as diverse as the teens themselves and extend far beyond what the Library can provide with existing resources and regular programming. They do share a desire to learn from and connect with experts who have turned their interests into careers and to improve our community. To meet these interests, we sought out and started partnering with various community agencies to provide programs ranging from Learning to DJ as taught by a teen DJ, to making spring rolls and sushi taught by a chef and entrepreneur, to building a better community with City Council members."

— Jennifer Korn, TeenSpot Manager at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

"The e-revolution is here. I've been purchasing digital resources to allow students to produce a variety of projects for school. One of my student aides is helping me compile top picks to download to the e-readers (we have twenty one of them now). Showing students how to access and utilize databases for their research has also become a major part of my teaching."

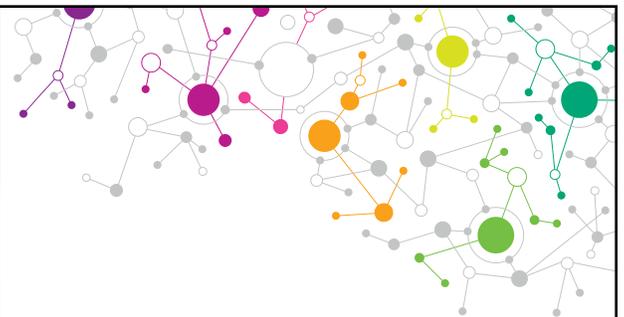— Kyla M. Johnson,
Farmington (NM) High School Library

NATIONAL FORUM ON LIBRARIES & TEENS

Read the full report and access free, supplemental resources including handouts, presentations, and more at

www.ala.org/yaforum

For further information on YALSA and library services for and with teens, **visit www.ala.org/yalsa/professionaltools** to access:

- Professional tools, handouts, position papers, and other helpful resources relating to library services for and with teens
- National guidelines on library services for and with teens
- YALSA's National Research Agenda

#ACT4#TEENS

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