

CASE STUDIES: REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES OF HOW LIBRARIES ARE RE-ENVISIONING TEEN SERVICES

# IDEA Lab Tech Team Internship

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## 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."