

Collaboration of Two Libraries for One Community's Students

▶ NANCY FIGEL AND RENEE NEUMEIER

Evanston (IL) Public Library and Evanston Township High School have found ways of working together, so that students and their families are able to tap the community's full array of library resources.

To a high school student, the differences between Evanston Township High School's library and the Evanston Public Library, less than a mile away, can seem slight. Both have books, computers tied to databases—sometimes even the same ones, and the data resides in the Internet cloud. Both have librarians who can answer questions and provide guidance. But their purposes and, certainly, their public funding are very different. The differences mean, when allied, the libraries can be a powerful, efficient aid for the students and families of the community.

Evanston Township High School is the single public high school of one of the dozen largest cities in Illinois. The school population, about 3,000 students, has great diversity in terms of race, culture, economic status, and language.

The high school library's resources, naturally, are curricular in nature for the students and teachers. At Evanston Public Library, the Teen Loft serves students from grade six (middle school) through grade twelve. It is a space planned and designed by teens and the library committee to fit their specific needs, including rooms for meetings, tutoring, and group work.

If a student relies only on the library resources of the high school, a student can have round-the-clock access to databases and other material provided through the school's website. But, during weekends and many evenings, there may be no easy way of reaching a person for help finding the materials they need or to get assistance with navigating online resources. There may be no way to have access to other resources, such as a room for study and meeting with friends, a new magazine, a movie, or the inspiration that comes from browsing the shelves. For some students, dependence on the school library alone can mean difficulty when preparing reports and conducting research without access to a computer and the Internet at home.

Nancy Figel, librarian at the Michael Library of Evanston Township High School, and Renee Neumeier, the librarian responsible for the Teen Loft at Evanston Public Library, found that collaboration started with the mutual understanding of its value for both institutions. The high school library found the public library not only cordial to collaboration, but full of ideas about bringing collaboration into existence.

First, Figel and Neumeier met one another as representatives of the two facilities. They came to understand each other's work, each other's strengths, and each other's interests. They learned of the resources in the other library—databases, assets, services, schedules—and saw the possibilities for increasing all the offerings through collaboration. Then, they took stock of the things that hinder students from fully utilizing the two libraries, and of the things that can help students connect to the public library's offerings.

Neumeier went to the high school. As a Teen Loft librarian—fresh and enthused about her work—she started gaining the trust of students. She toured the school's two libraries and talked with teachers she already knew and to teachers she met during the tours. The school library did something similar. Michael Library staff accompanied students on a walk to the Evanston Public Library, where students heard a presentation and met young adult author Sharon Draper. The event was meaningful to the students for an

additional reason: They experienced the public library and, in particular, the space of the Teen Loft.

At the high school, Figel arranged for Neumeier to conduct booktalks for classes and to meet with teachers for discussions about their projects. The frequent appearances, conducted as an outreach of Neumeier's Teen Loft management, made her familiar to the students, someone they could feel comfortable approaching for help at either facility.

In the course of the booktalks, Neumeier encourages students to put a book on hold at the public library when the school's library does not offer the book or existing copies are in circulation. Neumeier also offers to make Evanston Public Library cards for the students. When the cards are ready, the library sends the cards back to the teacher for distribution.

The easy process for obtaining an Evanston Public Library card has had great results. In addition to giving a student a card, the friendly welcome has more than once lifted a great weight from a student fearful of the consequences of keeping a book too long during second grade or from losing a book in eighth grade. Neumeier can—and often does—forgive the fines so that these small barriers drop away and students can begin accessing all that is available at the Evanston Public Library.

The collaboration of the two libraries has grown through constant communication and Neumeier's frequent presence at the high school. Under Neumeier's direction, the Evanston Public Library is a partner with the high school teachers as their classes research subjects and complete projects. Students can be vague in explaining their project needs, so the foreknowledge helps Evanston Public Library staff members serve the students well. Often, the Evanston Public Library creates carts of books that may duplicate or substitute for the resources students want to access at the school library.

The book reviews created by the students of freshman humanities teacher Paola Ruocco now appear on the web page of the Evanston Public Library Teen Loft. Another cross-pollination comes from the posting of Michael Library's book blog, prepared by Jessica Chadwick.

Neumeier's involvement with the classes and the projects at the high school has made students and teachers increasingly aware of the Teen Loft's nighttime and weekend availability. Students can make use of the Evanston Public Library until 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 6 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. There, they can have help with projects, have access to resources, can use computers for scanning and emailing material to themselves for use at school, can encounter new materials sparking new interests, and can have space for meeting, talking, and listening to music with friends.

Collaboration, once begun, must continue. The results are wonderful to witness. Students now find that library help does not end when the school library closes on Mondays through Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. Whether the students supplement their online work with the resources of the Evanston Public Library or go there to work on a project in a public space, the collaboration of the school and community libraries has expanded all that Evanston provides. ■

Nancy Figel is a librarian in the Michael Library of Evanston Township High School.

Renee Neumeier is the Evanston Public Library Teen Loft librarian.



USED WITH PERMISSION.

School and Public Library Partnerships in Monroe County Library System

LIBRARY A

- Teen Book Festival collaborations:
 - Tie TBF books into their booktalks and book discussions, both student and teacher discussions
- Assignment alerts:
 - The school librarians gather info on the assignments and send them along to us. This is particularly useful when several classes are doing the same topic at the same time. Plus, having the alerts...which include lists of acceptable and unacceptable resources...helps us help the students who may not remember what they can use and how. This also helps because I know what areas are heavily studied so I can buy more books when I see them published.
- School Library Cards/School Delivery service:
 - When teachers need books for a specific project and they want them at the school for students to check out when they visit the school library, the school librarian calls me and I pull books, check them out to the school library cards, and send them over in school delivery. If you don't already have a school delivery system set up...that would be great if you could work on that. I send lots of stuff over in school delivery...program brochures, TBF stuff, and Teen Read Week stuff...in addition to books requested. The School District has a courier service that goes between the schools...and we are just another stop on his route.
- Book Discussions:
 - Each school has a regular club...most are in the mornings (Bagels and Books) and I have it on my goals each year to attend some.
- Booktalks:
 - I go to the middle schools each year right before summer to present booktalks and let the students know what is going on at the library during the summer. I visit all the 6th graders...they come to the school library...and the school librarians set them all up. I have also gone to the schools to present booktalks on particular topics.
- Booklists:
 - We have collaborated in the past on developing the summer reading lists. They send me extra copies of the lists so I have them here throughout the summer and also send me the document file for extra duplication when needed.
- Send program brochures to schools to promote activities and reading incentives throughout the year
 - Post them online through their E-Flyer system (parents see these).
- Elementary Schools:
 - Schools send over portions of their book collections for circulation through the Public Library during summer.
 - J Librarians visit schools for storytelling events
 - Tours of public library as a field trip

LIBRARY B

- Library tours for classes.
- Visit Middle Schools at least once a year to do summer reading book talks.
- Murder Mystery Nights at the library with the schools providing the kids.

- Library booth in the cafeteria during lunch periods to promote the library, give away free stuff, and I always run a raffle for a fun prize (great program stats!)
- Email the school media specialists whenever I have a special program I feel their students would appreciate an extra invite to.

LIBRARY C

- Book talks with the librarians as classes come into the library
- Speak to individual classes:
 - especially in summer school sessions
- Media Days at the High School and Middle School:
 - setting up books to people loans, and having CDs available to listen to as well as videos/dvds to watch
- Career days
- Evening sessions at parent/teacher nights
- School librarians' meetings
- Set aside books for specific homework assignments
- Summer reading books
- Hold tours of the Library

LIBRARY D

- I work with her each month to get enough books for her high school book club through the public libraries. We don't charge the teens for these book club books. She usually checks in with me with a few titles and I check out the situation to let her know he the hold queue is looking.
- We collaborated together with one of the 9th grade English teachers. We both went into her class and did a bunch of book talks because they were starting an independent reading unit. So we met to talk about which books we were each doing and the assignment. She's also going to send me the reviews, which I may be posting on the library's teen review site.
- Potentially collaborate with the high school and junior high librarians on getting the school district to provide a bus from schools to the Teen Book Festival.
- I work with the junior high librarian during summer reading promotion for their school reading list. Last year she and I visited all the 8th grade classrooms together and did book talks off their list, plus a few that weren't on there. We made sure they knew the books are available at the public library, etc.

LIBRARY E

- The High School Librarian promotes my events and faxes over school assignments so we can be prepared with materials for the teens.
- We are also doing a presentation together for the Jr High & High School English teachers in December. I'm talking about hot new YA novels and graphic novels, and school librarian is going over resources in her library

and non-fiction that students use. Hopefully the school teachers will see our library as a resource to send the teens to – and the teachers will know who I am so they can help spread the word about my programs to their students.

LIBRARY F

- The schools help us promote certain events:
 - Amerks reading program, Red Wings reading program, and our Summer Reading Program.
 - Re: the SRP, each school's librarian puts together a list of recommended summer reading for their student population for us to distribute via our SRP display.
- We work closely with them to promote and augment an annual Community Reads program the school superintendent launched several years ago.
- The school librarians also will promote library programs specifically targeted to their age groups. Our recent Amerks hockey player and Moose visit was held at the elementary school and their librarian coordinated the logistics and hosted it. She and the primary school librarian did a lot to drum up enthusiasm in the schools for it as well.
- We are invited to meet with the librarians when they hold their regular staff meetings and do so several times each year.
- I often seek input from the librarians about books, series, magazines, etc. that are popular with the students and use that input when making purchases for our children's and teen collections.
- The school librarians are helpful in letting us know project assignments in various grades or subjects so we can be prepared. They provide us with summer project information too.
- It is clear from the mutual respect between the schools and our library that we realize our target population only benefits from us working together. It is well worth your time and effort to cultivate a strong relationship with your local school librarians.

Additional:

- Assist schools with their author visits by purchasing extra copies of their books and/or pull multiple copies from other libraries (with their knowledge).
- Take part in Mock Newbery and Mock Printz discussions and provide extra copies of books being discussed.

What can the Newark Public Library do for you and your students?

Teacher Totes (see attached flyer)

Just fill out a Teacher Tote Request Form or call the library and we'll fill it out for you) and we'll put together a customized collection of 10-15 books for you to use, depending on what subject, reading level, and material type you request. Teacher Totes can be picked up at the NPL or can be sent in school delivery. All you need is a library card.

Multiple copies of books

Ideal for collaborative units and reading in groups. These requests can be made by contacting Krystina Hardter at 331-4370 or khardter@pls-net.org.

Library field trips/tours

We love hosting groups at the library! We can show your class around the library, tell them what materials and programs are available to them, and give them time to explore. Tours/visits can be customized for each group to get the most out of their visit.

Classroom visits

We can visit your classroom, talk about what the library has to offer, read a story or do book talks, and hand out information for students to get their own library cards.

Book Clubs

We currently partner with Catie Abonado for a monthly 5th grade book club, but we would love to work with teachers and librarians at any of the schools to set up book clubs and other activities with their students.

Review Purchase Suggestions

Money is tight, and the best way to make the most of our dollars is to work together to make sure students and teachers have useful materials available to them.

We are attaching a form that you can use to suggest materials for the NPL to purchase. We will review the suggestions monthly, and you can check the materials out on your library card.

Summer Reading Program

Keep children and teens reading throughout the summer to ensure their reading skills do not decline during the summer months. We offer reading incentives, book clubs, and a variety of fun programs throughout the summer months.

...And we're open to suggestions!

If you can think of any other way that the NPL can support you, your students, and your curriculum, please don't hesitate to let us know!

Contact Us:

Newark Public Library
121 High Street
Newark, NY 14513
(315) 331-4370
www.newarklibrary.org

Krystina Hardter- Youth Services/Community Services Librarian
Email: khardter@pls-net.org

Caitlin Simonse- School Liaison Librarian
Email: csimonse@pls-net.org

Teacher Totes from the Newark Public Library!

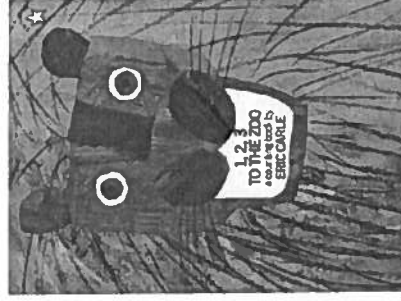
*Looking for books to share with your class on **community helpers**, or **insects**?

*Planning a unit on **numbers**, or **ABC's**?

All you need is an OWWL library card!

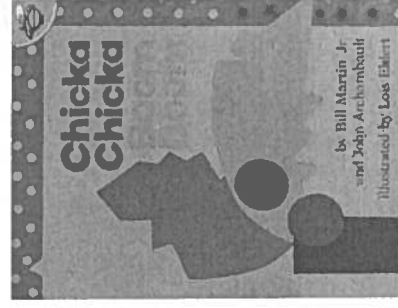
Our staff will put together a tote that includes a mixture of fiction and non-fiction books on just about any topic you can think of. Totes are checked out for six weeks any time of the year.

Any questions, call or stop by the children's room!



Hope to hear from you soon!

121 High Street
Newark, NY 14513
315-331-4370
newarklibrary.org
Online Catalog: OWWL.org



Teacher Totes from the Newark Public Library!

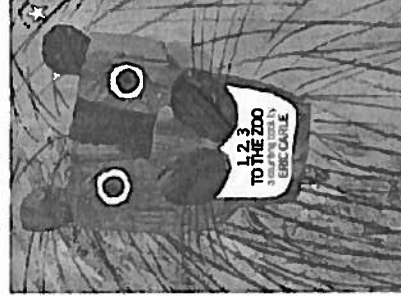
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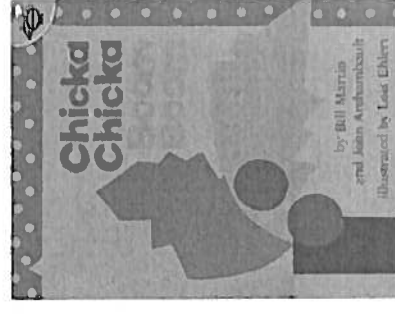
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Hope to hear from you soon!

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Newark, NY 14513
315-331-4370
newarklibrary.org
Online Catalog: OWWL.org



Teacher Tote Procedure:

Have Teacher fill out the "Teacher Tote Request Form".

Also, they should fill out the bottom for pickup date and delivery location.

Ask Fiction/Nonfiction? Read-a-loud/Independent readers? Ages/grade level?

We ask teachers for 3 days notice.

To Fill Request: (which sit on the back counter)

Be aware of pulling the books too soon. Notice date on bottom for pickup.

Don't assume someone else will do it.

Please don't place multiple copies of the same item on hold for teachers. Doing this limits the available items for other patrons. This directive comes from PLS.

Don't check items out a week before the teacher will be picking up the finished tote.

Gather items from our shelves only.

Limit the number of books to 15-20. Take into consideration how popular the topic is.

Check them out for 6 weeks. Stamp each item with the 6 week stamp.

Print the list to go into the teacher tote bag along with the items.

On Teacher Tote Request Form write how many were fiction & how many non-fiction.

Make out "Teacher Tote Date Due Slip" with name, due date & number of materials.

Staple this to the front of the Teacher Tote canvas.

If tote is waiting for pickup it goes in the cupboard.

If tote is to be delivered, leave note in log book for Gary Vanderbrook (delivery person from the schools) that there is a tote to be delivered & to what school/person.

The tote to be delivered can then go in the cupboard.

When completed:

Teacher Tote Request Form information needs to be transferred to the sheets labeled "Teacher Tote Tally".

Once information has been written on the "Teacher Tote Tally" for the Month/Year, the "Teacher Tote Request" form can be shredded.

***If the teacher requests things from other libraries, we can put these items on hold or more importantly teach them how to put their own items on hold. When the items arrive we will treat these items like regular patron holds and they will be held at the main desk.

***New items do "not" go out for 6 weeks in Teacher Tote.

Teacher Tote Request Form

Name: _____ Date _____ Staff Initials _____

Library Card # (User ID) _____ School Name: _____

Ages and/or Grade Level _____

SUBJECT : _____

Circle any or all that apply:

Fiction books Non-fiction books Read aloud books for the class

Books with CD or Cassette Books for independent student reading

Any special needs or specific requests _____

The more information you give us the better we can serve you !

Please allow a minimum of 3 days for staff to prepare your teacher tote.

PICKUP DATE: _____ Here at the Library _____ Newark School Delivery _____ 9/09

Teacher Tote Request Form

Name: _____ Date _____ Staff Initials _____

Library Card # (User ID) _____ School Name: _____

Ages and/or Grade Level _____

SUBJECT: _____

Circle any or all that apply:

Fiction books Non-fiction books Read aloud books for the class

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PICKUP DATE: _____ Here at the Library _____ Newark School Delivery _____ 9/09

Newark Public Library
121 High St Newark, NY 14513
315-331-4370 315-331-0552
www.newarklibrary.org

September 1st, 2013

Hello Mrs. Prinzi,

We at the Newark Public Library hope that you had an enjoyable summer. My name is Krystina Hardter, and I am the Youth Services/Community Services librarian at NPL. One of the most important parts of my position is working with the schools to help meet your teaching needs, as well as getting your students excited about reading.

Throughout the 2012-2013 school year, our staff collaborated with teachers, bringing in resources from the public library's collection and assisting teachers with finding materials to supplement their lessons. We also participated in a variety of school events, such as Kelley School's Literacy/Math night, Turn off Your TV Week, and Perkins School's Reading Night, and we would love to participate in any events that your school offers in during the coming school year.

I have distributed a packet of information to some of your teachers so that they can become aware of opportunities for collaboration with the library.

If you have any questions or comments, or have specific interest in any of these programs, please feel free to contact me at the library. I am looking forward to this coming school year and the many opportunities ahead!

Sincerely,

Krystina Hardter
Youth Services/Community Services Librarian
Newark Public Library
khardter@pls-net.org

School-Public Library Cooperation to Improve Services to Students

Every young person warrants the best library service possible and the services of professionally trained staff in both school and public libraries. Each agency provides this service to the fullest extent possible. School and public libraries, although separate entities, are complementary units within the community they serve.

Going Solo: "As a public librarian, I could...."

- Visit classes on a regular basis.
- Offer **special loan privileges to teachers and home schooling parents** for extended loan periods to meet curriculum needs.
- Offer the school librarians a "**building library card**" to use when assisting students with public library databases on the Internet, requiring a public library card to log on.
- Invite the school library media specialists to **hold their departmental meeting at the public library** at least once a year.
- **Give booktalks to students** on leisure reading or nonfiction that parallels the curriculum.
- Have a **table display at school open houses**, "Meet the Teacher" nights, and other events to promote public library services directly to families and parents.
- **Offer tours or open houses** to classes, faculty, and home schooling families.
- **Offer homework help workshops** for target audiences (e.g., grades 3-5, new middle school students) in the fall to give parents and children assistance in locating library materials for assignments.
- **Promote summer reading club** and its activities to help students remain at grade-level reading over the summer recess.
- Offer **deposit collections or "teachers' totes"** on themes to supplement teachers' classroom libraries.
- Make sure all my **public relations materials** distributed to schools have the complete name of the public library, its address, a map, phone number, hours of service, **AND** the youth specialists' names to promote the public library to users and non-users alike.
- **Send thank you letters to school principals highlighting the accomplishments of their students** who volunteer at the library.
- Arrange to **deliver materials from the schools** returned by mistake to the public library.
- **Offer display space** for student artwork or 3-D projects like dioramas, in the public library.
- Express willingness to **teach in-service trainings for school faculty** on booktalking, children's or young adult literature, or on-line searching techniques.
- **Offer presentations in child development classes** on "Choosing Books for Young Children" to enrich the students' curriculum.

- **Prepare a “school services brochure”** for school media specialists and faculty outlining the public library’s services (e.g., classroom visits, tours, extended loan privileges, etc.). At the beginning of the school year, make a **packet for each faculty member** including a service brochure, bibliographies or booklists for the age level, and program fliers of activities at the public library.
- **Donate discarded current reference books** to the schools.
- **Host a “school library media specialists” or faculty breakfast** (e.g., teachers, administrators, school board members, public library trustees, community officials) for informal exchange of ideas and comments over juice and Danish the week before school starts. Display new materials.

Cooperation is a two-way street. “We could.....”

- **Design a brochure, “Tips for Teachers,”** to outline what both libraries can do to assist teachers as well as what steps teachers can take to help students and parents avoid frustrations with assignments.
- **Set up a community “Library Council”** with representatives of school, academic, special, and public libraries in the community to aid in implementing joint projects.
- Generate **search aids** such as **annotated materials lists or pathfinders** that would highlight resources in both collections to meet assignment needs. Increase awareness of each other’s collections.
- **Provide a link to each other’s libraries on our web sites.**
- Design joint **“assignment alert”** and **“teacher notification”** forms with both libraries on the masthead.
- Provide the other library with a **staff list of all library personnel** and a **union list of the library’s magazines and journals.**
- Arrange **joint visits or readings by authors**, either in-person or by conference call, or other activities to promote reading, e.g., TV Turn-off Week, Parents as Reading Partners, National Library Week, Teen Read Week.
- **Send memos or other communications to the school principals and the public library’s Director and Board of Trustees** about the cooperative ventures and what is being planned.
- Arrange to **have school classes or service clubs present programs for younger children** at the public library (e.g., a preschool storyhour).
- Give joint presentations at school **“Career Days”** to encourage students to think about our profession and see the wide variety of work in librarianship.
- Arrange **orientation sessions for student teachers** to introduce school and public library services.

- **Share a Writer-in-Residence** to teach, critique writing, and give public readings.
- **Give a presentation on local cable television** to promote reading or encourage books as gifts for the holidays.
- **Fax or call assignments to one another.** (Don't assume the school library media specialist heard about it first!)
- **Cooperatively plan programs, contests** (e.g., "Why I Love My Library," bookmark design contest), community-wide reading festivals, or public relations events to promote both libraries. Announce contest winners over the public address system at the winners' schools.
- **Work together to promote the enjoyment of reading and books.**
- **Exchange newsletters, program fliers, course outlines, and annotated bibliographies and booklists.**
- **Establish a delivery route between the school and public libraries** using existing courier systems.
- **Encourage interlibrary loan of high-demand items** to supplement each library's holdings.
- **Place articles** concerning upcoming events in each other's newsletters.
- **Develop a policy** where students can get up to five **free** photocopies of reference materials.
- **Utilize one bar-coded library card for both the public and school libraries** (if the computer systems are compatible). Each institution will create its own database of borrowers, but use only one barcode.

As a school library media specialist (or teacher or home schooling parent), I could....."

- **Give advance notice of assignments** so materials could be put on temporary reserve or borrowing could be restricted.
- **Arrange class visits to the library** so the youth specialist can work directly with students on research needs.
- **"Moonlight" as a substitute librarian at the public library, volunteer at public library book sales, join the library's Friends group, or serve as a volunteer trustee** on the public library's Board of Trustees.
- **Assist** the public librarian with **recruitment of student representatives** to the public library's teen advisory council or young adult advisory board or with recruitment of a **student liaison to the public library's Board of Trustees.**
- **Invite the public librarian to attend school library media specialists' staff meetings** to

discuss public library activities and new resources at least once a year. If the district has regular meetings of the school media specialists, **have a public library liaison** or invite the public librarian to participate with an agenda item each time. **Rotate the locations of the meetings** to benefit the participants by visiting the different libraries.

- **Encourage student participation in public library activities** such as reading clubs and discussion groups.
- **Advertise to school faculty** the availability of **deposit collections** or **“teachers’ totes”** at the public library.
- **Post the public library’s hours** and **distribute public library service brochures** for students, encouraging them to utilize the public library for their assignment needs.
- Help the public library meet demand for required summer reading by **loaning books from the school library or English Department to the public library during the summer recess.**
- Offer the public library **display space and/or counter space for promotion of library programs** and volunteer opportunities.
- **Invite public librarians to offer a workshop** on a faculty conference day. School and public librarians could **present a panel discussion on library services at a faculty meeting.**
- **Arrange for public library books to be returned at the school** and sent back to the public library by courier.

School/Public Library Cooperation requires:

1. Constant communication.
2. Compromise to meet mutual expectations.
3. Action by both partners.
4. Setting aside politics, self-interest, and righteous indignation.
5. Efficient planning.
6. Greater interaction to lead to better understanding of roles, responsibilities, and restraints.
7. **Only a single phone call** to your colleague to start the process!

Based on “School-Public Library Cooperation to Improve Reference and Other Services to Students” in *The Basic Young Adult Services Handbook* (NYLA 1997), p. 235-236.
Updated and expanded by Lisa C. Wemett, Webster Public Library, 11/29/01.



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Library Partnerships

Making Connections Between School and Public Libraries

By Tasha Squires

Foreword by Gail Bush

"As funding is cut at many schools and public libraries, partnerships become even more important. This practical guide offers many time-saving paths to successful cooperation."

— Amy Alessio, teen librarian and
co-author, *A Year of Programs for Teens*

Connecting to share ideas, resources, and programs offers school and public libraries an exciting means of achieving their own goals as well as those of the community at large. In this timely guide, young adult library consultant Tasha Squires delves into the many possible avenues for partnership, from summer reading programs to book talks to resource sharing and more.

Squires's advice is designed to help librarians appreciate, communicate, and build on the benefits of school/public library relationships in order to make the most of tight budgets, create resource rich environments, and promote the development of lifelong learners. Her book is a must-read for school and public librarians who want to successfully connect and collaborate with other youth-focused professionals.

"The most comprehensive and practical source available on partnerships between public and school libraries."

— Jennifer Bromann, school library media specialist
Lincoln-Way Central High School (IL)

[Click here to listen](#) to Tasha Squires talk about her book *Library Partnerships* on Longshots hosted by Sara Ann Long.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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