A PASSION FOR PRINT

Recent titles in Libraries Unlimited Professional Guides for Young Adult Librarians
C. Allen Nichols and Mary Anne Nichols, Series Editors

Teen Library Events: A Month-by-Month Guide
Kirsten Edwards

Merchandizing Library Materials to Young Adults
Mary Anne Nichols

Library Materials and Services for Teen Girls
Katie O'Dell

Serving Older Teens
Sheila Anderson

Thinking Outside the Book: Alternatives for Today's Teen Library Collections
C. Allen Nichols

Serving Homeschooled Teens and Their Parents
Maureen T. Lerch and Janet Welch

Reaching Out to Religious Youth: A Guide to Services, Programs, and Collections
L. Kay Carman

Classic Connections: Turning Teens on to Great Literature
Holly Koelling

Digital Inclusion, Teens, and Your Library: Exploring the Issues and Acting on Them
Lesley S. J. Farmer

Extreme Teens: Library Services to Nontraditional Young Adults
Sheila B. Anderson

A PASSION FOR PRINT

Promoting Reading and Books to Teens

Kristine Mahood

Libraries Unlimited Professional Guides for Young Adult Librarians Series
C. Allen Nichols and Mary Anne Nichols, Series Editors

LIBRARIES UNLIMITED
A Member of the Greenwood Publishing Group

Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mahood, Kristine.
A passion for print : promoting reading and books to teens / by Kristine Mahood.
p. cm.—(Libraries Unlimited professional guides for young adult librarians series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1–59158–146–X (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Libraries and teenagers—United States. 2. Young adults' libraries—Activity programs—United States. 3. Young adults' libraries—Collection development—United States. 4. Teenagers—Books and reading—United States. 5. Reading promotion—United States. I. Title. II. Series: Libraries Unlimited professional guides for young adult librarians.
Z718.5M34 2006
027.62'6—dc22 2006003716

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2006003716
ISBN: 1–59158–146–X
ISSN: 1532–5571

First published in 2006

Libraries Unlimited, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
A Member of the Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.lu.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

SERIES FOREWORD

We firmly believe in young adult library services and advocate for teens whenever we can. We are proud of our association with Libraries Unlimited and Greenwood Publishing Group and grateful for their acknowledgment of the need for additional resources for teen-serving librarians. We intend for this series to fill those needs, providing useful and practical handbooks for library staff. Readers will find some theory and philosophical musings, but for the most part, this series will focus on real-life library issues with answers and suggestions for frontline librarians.

Our passion for young adult librarian services continues to reach new peaks. As we travel to present workshops on the various facets of working with teens in public libraries, we are encouraged by the desire of librarians everywhere to learn what they can do in their libraries to make teens welcome. This is a positive sign since too often libraries choose to ignore this underserved group of patrons. We hope you find this series to be a useful tool in fostering your own enthusiasm for teens.

C. Allen Nichols
Mary Anne Nichols
Series Editors

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges Timberland Regional Library for its support of library collections, services, and programs for teens; for its support of staff training in teen services; and for its permission to use the photographs included in this book.

I would like to thank my editors, Barbara Ittner at Libraries Unlimited, and Mary Anne Nichols, series editor, for editorial suggestions and encouragement, and C. Allen Nichols, for asking me if I'd be interested in writing a book about promoting reading and books to teens.

Special thanks goes to Sheila B. Anderson, for friendship, collaboration on writing projects and conference programs, and ongoing discussions of all things YA.

I also want to thank Susan Henderson, good friend and fellow young adult librarian. Her great advice helped me to start booktalking—and I haven't stopped.

And always, Jim Mahood, husband and best friend. Thank you for everything!

INTRODUCTION

Teens read books.

Fifty-seven percent of teens who participated in a Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) study reported reading books for pleasure sometime in the past seven days (Zollo 2004, 258). How many hours per week did these teens read for pleasure? According to the study, 3.32 hours (12- to 15-year-olds), 3.01 hours (16- to 17-year-olds), and 3.48 hours (18- to 19-year-olds) (Zollo 2004, 266). An average of 3.27 hours per week doesn't sound like much. But TRU also asked teen participants about the hours they spent per week on forty different activities, excluding eating, sleeping, and going to school. At 3.27 average hours, reading books for pleasure compares favorably with such highly publicized teen activities as going to the mall (3.82 average hours), instant messaging (4.64 average hours), and playing sports (3.77 average hours).

Teens read for many reasons.

They read to relax, to be entertained, to find out about things, and to experience intense emotions and situations. They read to find out about themselves, other people, and the world. They're reading books recommended by friends and assigned at school. They're reading books they bought in bookstores. And they're reading books they checked out at the public library.

A Passion for Print is intended to give you ideas, examples, and strategies for putting books into teens' hands. The premise of this book is that

everything in your library—from the physical space and signage to the collection, publicity, and programs—provides you with opportunities to promote reading and books. In Chapter 1 you'll learn about teens' reading abilities and experiences, and how they affect their assumptions about reading, books, and libraries. In Chapter 2 you'll discover how consumer products and services are marketed to teens, and learn how to apply marketing principles to promoting books.

Chapters 3 through 7 show you how to create library environments and materials that make books available and attractive to teens. Chapters address collections, teen spaces, displays, print promotions, and teen web sites.

Finally, you'll find some interactive and experiential methods for promoting reading and books. Chapters 8 through 10 explore readers' advisory, booktalking, and book-centered activities and events.

By promoting reading and books to teens, you also promote curiosity, fun, and proactive thinking. The young adult fantasy novel that asks, "What if . . .?" can encourage teens to look around and ask the same question about their own world. The young adult realistic novel that depicts teens meeting life's challenges with courage, humor, and resilience can reassure teens that their problems and joys are normal. Nonfiction books about real life, personal interests, making things, and the future can inspire teens with self-reliance and hope.

One of the most important things librarians and educators can do to promote reading and books to teens is to read young adult books. Your enthusiasm and love for young adult literature will shine through in your creation of welcoming reading spaces, eclectic collections, imaginative displays, thought-provoking booklists, and eye-popping web sites. These qualities also suffuse friendly readers' advisory conversations, compelling booktalks, and lively book discussion groups and other activities. And by creating the conditions for teens to tell other teens about good books, you will make it possible for that enthusiasm and love to radiate ever outward.

It is our privilege, as young adult librarians and educators, to work with teens. Teens are in the process of becoming themselves. It is a process that never ends—if we have the courage to keep growing and to keep learning from one another, whatever our age.

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

Zollo, Peter. 2004. *Getting Wiser to Teens: More Insights into Marketing to Teenagers*. Ithaca, NY: New Strategist Publications.

1

UNDERSTANDING TEEN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT READING, BOOKS, AND LIBRARIES

Teens like to read. Teens don't like to read. Teens read, but their reading skills are limited. Teens read and discuss thoughtful, complex fiction and nonfiction. Teens would read more if they had more time. Teens read magazines, chat messages, IMs, and web sites, but not "books."

Young adult librarians working in public libraries are bombarded with statistics, studies, anecdotes, and advice about teens, reading, and books. And they've observed a variety of teen responses to reading and books in their own libraries. There are days when not even one teen disturbs the perfect order of books on the shelves in the teen space. There are days when the shelving trucks are loaded with young adult books. "My son hates to read!" announces one parent, hoping you can come up with books that her son will read. While creating a list of titles, you see a teen boy lope across the library to the circulation desk, toting a 700-page fantasy novel.

How can you better promote reading and books to teens? How can you better promote the experiences—entertainment, information, and enlightenment—that open to teens through reading? Book displays, booklists and bookmarks, web sites, booktalking in schools, readers' advisory, book-related events—there are many ways to reach teens, whether they are committed, occasional, or resistant readers. Advertisers promoting

products and services to teens study not only teen spending habits, but also the life experiences that form their assumptions, attitudes, and desires. They know that teens do not spend their money in a vacuum, but rather, in the context of their experiences, as both individuals and social beings.

Similarly, as a young adult librarian, you can benefit from studying not only teen reading habits, but also the reading experiences that have formed their assumptions, attitudes, and desires about reading and books. Their reading experiences include the following: learning to read, types of reading, reasons why they do and don't read, reading skills, reading in school, and reading on their own. Teens walk into stores with assumptions about products and services based on their prior experiences and word of mouth. Likewise, teens walk into libraries with assumptions about reading and books. These experiences influence how readily they will respond to library promotions that are designed to appeal to their likes and to overcome their dislikes.

This chapter reviews a sampling of reading studies. Some studies involved many thousands of teens; others, under 2,000 teens. Some studies were based on random samples, others on self-selected responses. No one study tells the entire story of teens and reading, but all tell part of the story, and sometimes their results overlap. Each area of research has its own application to the promotion of reading and books to teens. By learning how we learn to read, types of reading, and types of nonreaders, librarians can better understand teens' relationship with reading. By knowing why teens read (or not), librarians can better showcase books that will appeal to the positive feelings about books held by reading teens and overcome the negative feelings about books held by nonreading teens. By reviewing national and state reading skills statistics, librarians can get a general idea of the reading ability of teens. And by finding out about teen reading experiences in schools, public librarians can gain insight into how reading skills are formed and fostered, and what attitudes about reading such experiences may inculcate.

These studies identify patterns and trends among teens and reading that can lead to corrective or compensating action in schools and public libraries. They also give you methods for gauging the reading experiences of and assumptions about reading and books of teens using your library. Methods can be as simple as asking teens what they're reading, or as elaborate as distributing reading interest surveys via English teachers in middle and high schools. The point is, these studies offer you many ways to get the scoop on teens, reading, and books.

THE EXPERIENCE OF READING

Put yourself in a teen's shoes. You've only been reading for between seven and twelve years. Much of that reading has been assigned and tested. Because, after all, you're expected to learn something from what you've read and to re-create it for a test, discussion, or term paper.

Think of the latest issue of *VOYA*, *Library Journal*, or *American Libraries* as a social studies textbook. You read the funny columns and the two-page article about teen book groups, but you skipped that article with all the graphs, tables, pie charts, and other numerical representations. You're planning to get around to reading it later, but why rush? It's not like there's going to be a test on it.

See what I mean?

Imagine what it would be like if you knew that you would be tested on your comprehension of the contents of professional journal articles. Imagine what it would be like if you were assigned books to read that you had to "discuss" with your colleagues, and your supervisor posed a question, glanced around the silent room, and put *you* on the spot to answer it. Imagine what it would be like to have to write book reports again. Imagine what it would be like to be assigned books to read for the specific purpose of improving your reading ability—as measured by some standardized test.

Why am I going on and on about this? Because I want you to re-experience what the relationship between teens and reading can be like. And despite the dire reading experiences cited above, I'm not suggesting that reading is difficult, unpleasant, and anxiety-provoking for all teens. I just want to remind you that the experience of reading is not the same for teens as it is for adults. For teens, not every book is of their own choosing, and generally, there's going to be a test.

LEARNING TO READ

The nature of teens' relationship with reading is influenced by how well they have learned to read.

In *Stages of Reading Development*, Jeanne Chall (1983, 40–58) proposes that people learn to read over the course of about twenty years, which she divides into six stages. She acknowledges the similarity of reading stages to levels of cognitive and language development, and is aware of the influence upon the reader of home, school, community, and society. Chall's stages of reading ability development reflect the reader's ability not only

to understand more complex language structures, but also to bring a broader and deeper experience of the world to reading. Chall acknowledges that no one conforms exactly to her guidelines, and that stages overlap. Her stages do, however, provide young adult librarians with a model of where teens have been, where they are, and where they could go as readers.

In Stage Zero (preschool), children learn the basics of language, what books are, and what books are used for. Reading aloud to children before they enter school facilitates this stage. Reading and books thus attain a reality before they are associated with school, tests, and classification.

In Stage One (kindergarten and grade one), children learn to turn written symbols into sounds, words, and meaning, focusing their reading skills on the words on the page. Presumably, children who have had positive preschool experiences with reading and books will enjoy getting the key that opens them. Chall refers to this skill as "decoding."

In Stage Two (grades two and three), children pick up speed and accuracy in reading. Readers begin to match what they read on the page with their developing language skills and their growing knowledge of the world. The more a child reads—solidifying the gains of Stages One and Two—the better prepared he is for Stage Three, and the more positive an experience reading becomes. Chall refers to this skill as "fluency."

In Stage Three, children in grades four through eight focus on increasingly complex reading tasks. They are now ready to take in and retain new information through reading: their knowledge is no longer dependent on direct experience. They gain vocabulary, and read different types of writing, such as poetry, fiction, essays, and textbooks. They learn to read for different reasons, such as finding facts, understanding tasks, outlining a subject, or analyzing an argument. With its multiple viewpoints and presentation of emotion and drama, fiction begins to be appreciated. Chall refers to this skill as the first step in "reading for learning the new."

In Stage Four, teens in grades nine through twelve learn to examine what they've read in order to weigh evidence, evaluate arguments, and make judgments. High school textbooks and assigned reading present more layers of facts and ideas than elementary or middle school books. Reading more challenging fiction—young adult, adult, and classic—also builds teens' ability to understand more than one point of view. Chall refers to this stage as "reading for multiple viewpoints."

In Stage Five, college-age young adults must bring increased cognitive abilities, knowledge, and self-direction to the texts they read. Chall differentiates Stage Five from Stage Four by emphasizing the need for

readers to synthesize what they have read. It is no longer sufficient to analyze discrete texts; readers must make connections and from this synthesizing process create new knowledge.

Readers may reach a stage of reading development and not progress further. Also, they may attain different stages for different types of text. For example, the literary scholar's Stage Five reading of literary theory may drop back to Stage Three when it comes to reading an advanced biology textbook.

TYPES OF READING

In *The Reader, the Text, and the Poem*, Louise Rosenblatt (1978, 22–47) identifies two types of reading experience: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading is reading with a stated purpose: to get the information needed to pass a test, solve a problem, or master a skill. Derived from the Latin verb *efferre*, meaning "to carry away," efferent reading is a means to an end. Examples of materials read in this manner include school textbooks, driver's license handbooks, how-to nonfiction books, and electronic equipment manuals. These reading choices are dictated by the reader's needs. There are always exceptions, but usually these materials are not read for fun—for entertainment or to satisfy intellectual curiosity—they do not offer any type of emotional experience, and they are not much discussed with other readers.

Aesthetic reading is reading for enjoyment, when the writing sets off within the reader associations, emotions, and ideas that commingle with the text. Readers can derive enjoyment from the free exploration of facts and ideas—without having to worry about passing a test, solving a problem, or mastering a skill. Examples of material that is read in this manner include fiction and popular nonfiction such as biography, history, science, true adventure, travel, religion, psychology, and philosophy. These reading choices are inspired by the reader's interests. They are usually read for fun, and can arouse passionate discussions among readers. The reader's primary purpose for reading is what happens in the mind while reading.

A judicious mix of efferent and aesthetic reading materials can help readers progress through the stages of reading development. And access to different types of reading materials can influence what teens think about reading. Teens who enjoy reading fiction and find plenty of it may, in turn, say they like to read. Teens who enjoy reading nonfiction and don't find very much of it may say they don't like to read—when what they really mean is they don't like to read fiction.

WHY TEENS READ

Remember that teen boy who was lugging a 700-page fantasy novel? Or those shelving trucks crammed with young adult fiction titles? Maybe you were booktalking at a school and at the end of your presentation you asked teens if they had any good books to recommend, and they sang out dozens of titles.

Teens are reading. Why? Because they like it.

"I like to read because you are in a world of you [sic]. With movies you don't get to live in a world of you [sic]" (Carroll and Gregg 2003, 60).

"I think reading is great. It lets you explore your imagination and no two people reading the same book will be imagining the same thing" (SmartGirl 2003).

Mary Kay Chelton and James Rosinia explained the appeal of young adult fiction by linking it to adolescent development. "[Young adult novels] re-create psychologically the reality of the young adult's 'personal fable' with all its exaggerated sense of feeling unique. A personal fable is a realistic fantasy in which a young protagonist solves personal problems without adult help or interference, as if this were the first and only time that anyone had faced these particular problems" (1993, 12–13).

As such, reading is another means by which teens can expand their world and keep looking for an answer to the question, "Who am I?" Personal fables in fiction offer teens role models, demonstrations of relationships and problem solving, and depictions of the intensity of teen lives. Nonfiction and magazines feed teens' need to find out about themselves, each other, and the world.

WHY TEENS DON'T READ

Not all teens are reading. Why not?

"I think that reading is *extremely* boring and it gives me stress! The only thing I will willingly read is a magazine" (SmartGirl 1999).

"I think that reading takes up a lot of time that I don't have, and I enjoy reading when it's a good book that I'm interested in, but I don't have time for books like that since the reading that I have to do is for school, and I don't like the books they choose for me" (SmartGirl 1999).

Dr. G. Kyleen Beers differentiates among three types of nonreaders. Readers who are "dormant" like to read but only under certain circumstances, usually when they feel they have the time. Readers who are "uncommitted" are confident that when they need to read something,

they'll do it. Unlike dormant readers, uncommitted readers don't enjoy reading and think of it as a skill rather than as a pleasant activity. Readers who are "unmotivated" declare that they won't read, ever, because reading is boring and useless. One teen explained that the reason she found reading to be boring was that she could not visualize the scenes described in a book: she could decode the words but could not enjoy the story (1996, 33).

Reviewing research, studies, and interviews with educators, Patrick Clinton (2002, L5) suggests that the time and money spent on early childhood education is paying off. Children are learning to decode written symbols into sounds, words, and meaning, and they are also gaining the speed and accuracy necessary to achieve a fourth-grade reading level. But the pace of improvement begins to slow for some readers, and they lag behind in the acquisition of vocabulary, the understanding of more complex sentence structures, and the ability to adapt reading skills to handle different types of text. Clinton suggests that older kids and teens are expected just to "get it" without the same level of structure and support that was devoted to their achieving reading skills in early grades. If they don't get it, the act of reading itself becomes a struggle, and every difficult encounter with a book reinforces a sense of inadequacy and failure. If you were lousy at baseball, computer games, or playing a musical instrument, would you seek out opportunities to feel bad?

Baseball, computer games, and playing musical instruments are optional activities. However, in a society increasingly dependent upon escalating levels of information literacy—in jobs, health care, finance, and politics, to name only a few arenas—basic reading and communication skills are no longer sufficient for success. The bar has been raised.

TEEN READING SKILLS

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), of the U.S. Department of Education, studies the academic achievement of U.S. kids and teens periodically, issuing its findings in the *Nation's Report Card*. Among the academic skills the NAEP tests is reading. (Details and results of reading assessment surveys for several years are available at the NAEP web site, located at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.) While the studied population varies in number and location from year to year, the design of the reading assessment test remains constant. Students in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades are given three reading samples, each intended to measure their ability to read for literary experience, to read for information, and to read in order to perform a task (eighth and twelfth grades only).

Questions based on the reading samples are of two types. Multiple-choice questions gauge students' understanding of individual reading samples and their ability to put together concepts from all three samples. Constructed-response questions elicit written responses from students based on their understanding of the samples. Both types of questions are designed to measure students' ability to do the following: form a general understanding of the reading sample and develop an interpretation, make reader/text connections, and examine the content and structure of the reading sample itself.

Students' reading achievement levels are characterized as follows:

- *below basic*, defined as below partial mastery of knowledge and skills necessary for proficient work at grade level;
- *basic*, defined as partial mastery of knowledge and skills necessary for proficient work at grade level;

Table 1.1.
Reading Achievement Levels, 2002–2003 (NAEP)

Grade 4

Below Basic		At or Above Basic		At or Above Proficient		Advanced	
2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
38%	38%	62%	62%	30%	30%	6%	7%

Grade 8

Below Basic		At or Above Basic		At or Above Proficient		Advanced	
2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
26%	28%	74%	72%	31%	30%	2%	3%

Grade 12*

Below Basic	At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient	Advanced
2002	2002	2002	2002
26%	74%	36%	5%

*Results not available for 2003.

- *proficient*, defined as solid grasp of subject matter, including subject knowledge, application of knowledge, and analytical skills; and
- *advanced*, defined as superior academic performance.

Even taking into consideration that the reading samples were not of the students' choosing and may have held less interest than chosen reading—thus reducing reader involvement with the text—these results suggest that while most American students master reading at basic levels, the trajectory of their reading ability flattens. It's possible that only a third of the teens who visit your library would ever consider picking up a book to read for entertainment or to satisfy their curiosity.

Concern over gender disparities in these and other reading skills scores, as well as the preponderance of boys in remedial reading classes, has drawn attention to boys and reading (Smith 2002, 1–4). Boys are reading magazines; computer game manuals; and adventure, fantasy, and science fiction. But these are seldom the types of texts used in assigned school reading, classroom discussion, or standardized tests (Aronson 2001, 101). Like the participant in the SmartGirl Survey who reads magazines but describes reading as "*extremely* boring," a teen boy who declares that he doesn't like to read may be thinking of "reading" as assigned school reading, rather than the types of materials he reads on his own. He may not have enjoyed reading an assigned book and all of the classroom activities designed to foster and measure reading skill: vocabulary tests, plot summaries, and class discussions. Such negative associations can cast a pall over reading itself.

TEEN READING EXPERIENCES

Assigned Reading

Teens have to read textbooks. Even if the subject is interesting and the presentation is appealing, reading a textbook is *work*—shadowed by an upcoming test. Doing work on which you will be tested and judged may lead to some anxiety, even distaste, for reading. However, it's also important to remember that the teen years see a growth spurt in cognitive development (Strauch 2003, 15–21). Teen brains are growing, and they are hungry. They are capable of gobbling up facts as disparate as Revolutionary War battle dates and chemical formulae. Intellectual curiosity is real, and the pop culture stereotype of a teen rolling his eyes at the thought of reading a textbook is only *a* fact, not *the* fact, of teen life at school.