

Developing Irresistible Teen Programs Webinar **Presented by: Sarah Flowers & Susan Brackney**

Q&A Log

General

Q: What age group are you targeting when you say "teen"?

A: I use the YALSA definition of 12-18; in my head tend to think of Middle School and High School. A lot of the example programs discussed have been done successfully with Middle School students but some would be a little different if done with High School students. And in reality, it is middle school students who are most likely to come to programs.

Q: Any suggestions for getting City Hall to lift a total ban on any food at the library? Are there resources for arguments for food with teen programming?

A: A couple of thoughts: First, could you start with having food outside? Do you have an outside area that would work (at least at certain times of the year?) Second, you could (or more likely, your director could) ask for permission to have food on certain occasions in certain specific places in the library: only in the program room, or the YA area, for example. Then add to the request assurance that the library staff will do a thorough clean-up afterwards. Perhaps you could even hire a special cleaning service. You might do a little research on libraries that allow food (as many now do) and show your City Manager that it's not as devastating as he might think.

Q: Once you have a "fun" program in your library, do you ever find that the teens come back to the library in a disrespectful manner because the program was more "out of the ordinary" in regards to behavior expectations for a library?

A: Actually, my experience is the opposite. These kinds of programs tend to make the teens feel more wanted and respected and make them feel more ownership of the library. One approach might be to say something at the time of the program (or when you see the bad behavior) to the effect that you really went out on a limb for them to get permission to do this special program, so you are counting on them to not blow it for you (and for them) by being disrespectful.

Q: There is a huge difference in the maturity of 13 year old boys, and 16 year old girls... how do you plan events given this fact? Last summer some of our girls asked if we had to let the boys be involved at all...

A: One approach would be to have multiple "stations" or projects going on at the same time, so that each could do the one that was most appropriate. Another approach would be to have a quiet word with the boys, letting them know that the best way to impress these older girls is to act more mature, and follow the lead of the girls. Or you could have "girls only" AND "boys only" programs, but that would be twice the work and time.

Q: My library system spans a wide spectrum of economic and racial categories. What strategies work best in under-resourced and/or low literacy communities?

A: The best thing to do is to talk to the teens in your community to see what they would be interested in. Often in these situations, more formal programs such as: homework help, college planning, testing skills are useful programs, particularly with populations where the parents may not have had any post-high school training. Workforce development programs that focus on skills for applying for jobs, such as interviewing and job application tips can be useful as well. Many areas have these social focused programs available, but again, take the time to determine whether these are the types of programs that your teens are seeking or are they looking for something more entertainment focused.

Q: How do you tie all of these programs into the distinct literacy goals of the library?

A: A lot of the programs I mentioned in the webinar are specifically focused around books, so you would just need to point that out: for example, a lot of the passive programs, like the tweets and book spine poems and so on require having read the books to make them work. And others, like magnetic poetry, are definitely literacy-based. Even things like gaming programs can be tied to literacy simply by including in the program a little booktalking—have some books from the library that are related in some way to the topic of the program and share those BRIEFLY with the teens. If you need to sell this to the administration, you just need to look for these kinds of literacy links and point them out when you are making your program proposal.

Operational Concerns

Q: Do you make them preregister or limit numbers?

A: Different libraries do different things, so there is no one right answer. My personal preference is not to have preregistration or limits, but that isn't always practical. If you do preregistration, be sure to get their cell phone numbers so you can text them a couple of times to remind them to show up. There's nothing worse than having 30 pre-registered and 2 show up for the program. And you may have to enforce limits based on your space and equipment. In that case, make it clear that only the first x number who arrive will be admitted to the space—a little competitive spirit never hurts! Then, if possible, have some sort of other activity (like the passive program ideas) for anyone who gets turned away from the door.

Q: When you had Teens presenting a program to younger children, did you ever run into a liability problem as in responsibility or permissions?

A: No, because we just did it all in the library, and the children's librarian and I were with them all the time.

Q: How do you handle younger brothers and sisters who come to these programs that want to participate but are too young for some of the activities?

A: First, your publicity (aimed at parents) should emphasize that this program is only for ages 13 and up (or whatever), to try to limit this problem. Second, you could have a separate craft or activity aimed at younger kids that you can give them. Third, make a deal with another staff person (children's librarian or whomever) to take the younger kids off to another part of the library for a story time or other activity.

Q: We close at 6:00 pm (3:00 pm on Friday, and 2:00 pm on Saturday) and are strongly discouraged against planning after-hours programs, so time is working against me here. Do you have any suggestions for someone with very little afterschool time?

A: Wow, that's tough! Again, passive programs are your friends here. For the other programs, well, you have Monday-Thursday from 3-6, so you probably just need to pick a day and go for it. You could see if Saturday late-morning/noontime programs work in your community (sometimes that can be hard because teens are involved in sports and other activities on Saturday).

Program Content

Q: I'm interested in doing Battle of the Bands...anyone had a great turn out? I would love to find out what is needed, etc.

A: You could try posting this question on the YALSA listserv YA-YAAC. (Go to lists.ala.org to sign up for the list.) I know that San Jose Public Library has done a Battle of the Bands, so you could contact them. Here's their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/sjplbattleofthebands>. And if you just do a Google search on "library battle of the bands" you'll find lots of libraries that you can contact for more information.

Q: Many of these programs seem to pertain predominately to females. What can we do to attract more teen boys to the library and to teen programs?

A: Actually, a lot of the ones I mentioned get great responses from both boys and girls. Boys especially love the Frankentoys. Gaming is often big with boys. The key as always with teens is to get the boys who do show up to bring their friends. If you have teen boys who work or volunteer in your library, talk to them about what kinds of programs their friends would come to, and encourage them to invite friends.

Q: Where would be a good place to look for Readers' Theatre for teens? I have Readers' Theatre for younger students.

A: One thing I have had success with is having the older kids present the Reader's Theatre to younger children so the children's materials can still work in this context. Some other resources: Readers Theatre for Middle School Boys and More Readers Theater for Middle School Boys, by Ann N. Black (Teacher Ideas Press, 2008). Classic Readers Theater for Young Adults, by Suzanne Barchers (Teacher Ideas Press). Readers Theatre for Young Adults, by Kathy Latrobe (Libraries Unlimited, 1989). Paul Fleischmann's "poems for two voices" work well, too—Joyful Noise and I Am Phoenix. Or you could make up your own scripts, using short stories, like those of O. Henry (The Ransom of Red Chief, anyone?) or Mark Twain.

Q: Our Summer Reading Club 2015 theme is superheroes, and I've been tossing around the idea of having a "Comicon" as a kick-off event for teens. I am wondering if anyone has ever done anything like this and has any advice or suggestions? (see viewer comments below for additional ideas)

A: This sounds really ambitious. I would be interested to hear what others have done with this and see that you can find a lot of ideas from our listeners below. My advice would be that something like this will need a lot of planning. In general, I would allow for a lot of time to do that planning. The time needed will vary depending upon the vision for your event. Will you have speakers or is this just an opportunity for kids to show up in costume? This vision will determine the amount of time needed to ensure the success of the event. This could definitely be extremely popular but you will really want to think through what you're trying to accomplish, what space and other resources needed. Speakers, artists or those from the film industry would be great parts of the program but would require a lot of advance planning.

Q: What are great programs for urban libraries serving the urban teens?

A: Look at what some of the urban libraries are doing—NYPL, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc. There’s no one answer, because urban libraries have different needs—some are very well off, others not so much. Some have whole programming departments, others don’t. Denise Agosto and Sandra Hughes-Hassell have a book on Urban Teens in the Library (ALA, 2009) that has some chapters on programming. Also, you might see what the Urban Libraries Council has to offer (www.urbanlibraries.org).

Q: Is there a website or blog where librarians can share what programs they do with other librarians?

A: The Pinterest board I mentioned is a good place (http://www.pinterest.com/heather_booth/teen-programming-in-libraries-a-collaborative-boar/). Also, YALSA’s wiki, and the YALSA discussion list YA-YAAC (links in the handout).

Q: How do you feel about showing publicly licensed movies at the library for teens with refreshments? I do this because it has instant appeal, it doesn't need a lot of set up, and teens enjoy the relaxed social atmosphere. However, I must admit I feel a bit guilty.

A: Why feel guilty? As you say—instant appeal, easy set-up, great social atmosphere. If you really feel you need to add some “value” to it, include a booktalking segment—suggest some books that are related in some way to the movie (if you liked the movie, try this book). Or how about sharing some books on movie-making, script-writing, set design, etc.? Or at the end of the movie, get the kids talking about things like: If you had made this movie, what songs would you have included in the soundtrack? Did this movie remind you of any books you’ve read? What are they, and what’s the connection in your mind?

Q: Do we need some sort of license in order to host a "Movie in Your PJs" event? Where we show a new release movie perhaps?

A: You **must** have public performance rights to show any movie in the library. The easiest way to do it is to go through Movie Licensing USA (<http://library.movlic.com/>). All feature films require a license. Some documentaries come with public performance rights, but you need to check.

Remote Programming

Q: Do you have experience with or thoughts on doing remote programming outside of the library? Our library is not within walking distance from the local middle or high school. The YMCA, however, is right next to the middle school and is "the" afterschool meeting place for tweens. The Y seems like it might be a great place for remote programming in our town, but I've never done such programming before. For context, we just have me working on teen programming, as well as also heading up our sizable daily interlibrary loans/billing and staffing the desk.

A: Remote programming absolutely can work, and sometimes it’s the best option, because of location (as in your case) and space. In the case of the Y, your best bet would be to develop a partnership with someone at the Y—they probably have an afterschool coordinator, or someone who is responsible for programming. Get to know that person, and figure out what you can do together to put on a program.

Q: What are the benefits vs. pitfalls of remote programming?

A: Benefits: you get out to where the teens are, and spread the library’s profile in the community. Pitfalls: well, you have to lug stuff with you, and your attendees may not be regular library users, so you may have to think differently about how you share the library’s story. But that’s also a benefit!

Program Promotion/Engagement

Q: Do you have any experience working with Tumblr and reaching out to teens?

A: I don't have any personal experience with this. Like all social media, it can work if that is where they are, but otherwise, it just goes into the void.

Q: Are there any interactive ways to get them to go to the Facebook page?

A: One possibility is to have some sort of contest or drawing that involves going to the Facebook page. The Solano County Library in California does a teen photo contest every year, and they post the submitted photos on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Solanolibrary>. Someone in the comments below mentioned using the screensavers on the library's computers to advertise programs and you could do the same to send them to your Facebook page.

This is a quick note from Susan Brackney at Evanced... If you use our [SignUp](#) software to manage your events, your patrons can "like" events as they register. You can also use your Facebook page to highlight your events by embedding your events on your library's Facebook page.

Q: What are the best strategies to integrate social media into teen programming?

A: I wish I knew! As I said in the webinar, think about your audience—you might be able to have more success targeting parents with your library's Facebook page and Twitter feeds. Or as in the question above, have some sort of special draw to get them to the Facebook page—a contest or drawing.

Q: What about having a teen newsletter to market programs?

A: Sure, but think about how to distribute it. Electronically? But what's your distribution list? Many libraries have connections with schools, who will let them send flyers home with school announcements. Or again, are you aiming at informing parents?

Q: We don't get teens in the library after school. I am not even sure if many know where the library is. I have a TAB group of 5 kids but cannot get any other kids to come to any programs that I hold. How should I try to get the students to come to library in general not just to programs?

A: Often this is a transportation issue, and that's a tough one to overcome. What do your TAB kids say about it? Have you done any work with the schools? Sometimes having a teacher or two who expect the teens to use specific library resources can help. Make some partnerships and see what happens.

Q: I want to expand the number of teen programs in my library, but I do not have a core patron base in the teenage age bracket. Are there suggestions for just getting teens into the library?

A: See the response above. Also, find out if you can do school visits. Booktalking, or talking up the library's databases are good topics. Work with the school librarian or with specific teachers (often English teachers) to schedule something.

Q: I have mostly homeschooled teens coming to my library (all girls). How can I reach out to the school teens?

A: Again, see two above responses.

Q: We host weekly teen programs, yet we see lower and lower numbers every month. Do you think TOO MUCH programming can drive away teens?

A: I suppose it is possible—they don't feel a need to show up when they know something is coming up again next week. But why don't you try talking to them and find out? Maybe the programs are repetitive or aimed too young or something else. Ask around—not just of the kids who show up at the programs, but also the ones who are in the library but don't come to programs.

Q: I'm trying to engage "rowdy" teens at my library. Right now, I'm doing crowd control. How do I get them to see me as a positive force?

A: First of all, try to get to know a few of them personally. Find out their names, what they like, etc. (Often, if you can engage the leaders of the group, everyone else will fall in line.) Offer things for them to do—some of the passive programming ideas might work. Or give them a publisher's catalog (or some other collection development list) and ask for their comments and suggestions. Ask them to give you a list of what (movies, books, music) the library should buy. Ask them to write "shelftalker" cards for their favorite (movies, books, music) and then display those along with the items. In other words, get them to see that you respect them, and they will respect you.

Funding

Q: What is the webpage for the grants?

A: For YALSA's grants: <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/awardsandgrants/yalsaawardsgrants>. Demco also has a grants database available through their website: <http://ideas.demco.com/free-library-education-grants-search/>. In addition, you will find a webinar with tips on grant writing <http://ideas.demco.com/blog/grant-writing-tips/>.

Q: I feel like I am always asking for money from someone or organization. Do you have any suggestions on how to go about asking for funding?

A: I know, it can be hard, especially if you aren't a natural "salesperson." But, I think the key is to know yourself what you are asking for and why. So, for example, if you are asking for money or food or whatever for a program, include in your request the reason the program is important—use the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets>) to come up with one or two specific things the teens will gain from the program. And don't forget to think about what the community or the funder will get: talk about how engaging teens helps the whole community by motivating them, and helping them grow up to be responsible adults (again, read the Developmental Assets for help in framing this). Or include information on how your program fits with the library's (or the city's) strategic goals.

Teen Spaces

Q: If you were building a facility for Teens what would you suggest doing or how would you determine what is needed regarding facilities for teens?

A: Read YALSA's Teen Space Guidelines: <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/teenspaces>. It's pretty much all there! Demco has additional information on Teen Spaces through their Ideas + Inspiration site. See the Innovations in Teen Spaces webinar <http://ideas.demco.com/webinar/innovations-teen-spaces/> which also includes a number of valuable downloads and resources, as well as the article "How to Connect With Teens and Make Them Feel Welcome" <http://ideas.demco.com/blog/connect-teens-make-feel-welcome/>. For more ideas, Demco also has a Teen landing page on their website: http://www.demco.com/goto?child_sp_teen2.

Viewer Comments

Comic Con Feedback

- Cumberland County Library in Fayetteville, NC does a Library con event every year and it is fantastic
- We did a con at our library for the past two years.
- We've had 2 mini cons here at Laredo Public Library - we tied it in with our Star Wars Day and Batman's 75th Anniversary
- Austin Public Library used to do an event called YomiCon, which was all about manga, anime, and comics. They included cosplay chess, an artist teaching drawing, a photo booth, anime jeopardy, and LOTS of staff! I was an intern there during library school and got to help plan it.
- Chesapeake Public Library in VA has a comic-con event: <https://shoboucon.wordpress.com/>
- We have done it and my boss has made contacts with various community groups of adults who do cosplay. They love to volunteer their time to attend our events in costume and meet kids. It's super popular!
- We do LibraryCon on Free Comic Book Day; free resources are available through their website and local comic books stores. It's in May.
- I would be wary of calling it a comic con. Most kids who would attend have probably been to an actual con and would have high expectations.
- The person asking about the con might be able to contact the library and ask how they set it up. They presented at VLA recently.
- I am part owner of a gaming convention. I would suggest partnering with a local convention, gaming group, or store. You can also read the YALSA games at your library page [<http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/?s=games+at+the+library&submit=Search>]. Free comic book day is in May
- I held a cosplay after library hours and made it a potluck where they brought their own food
- I recommend doing a small version of maybe a panel discussion for one program and maybe a cos-play contest for a separate program.
- Newport News Public Library will host its 2nd annual Anime and Manga conference for tweens and teens only. We featured cosplay, a cartoonist and videos.
- Amarillo Public Library does a pop culture con every summer; www.AMA-con.com for more information.
- We invited the local comic book stores, record stores and craft makers to come in and set up vendor booths.
- Our teens assisted with the planning of our ToshCon Conference
- We've invited the 501st Legion (professional Star Wars cosplayers) which is a non-profit group.

Passive Programming

- Sticky Notes are really fun to use with the Passive Question Programs or things like that. Let the Teens write their opinion on a sticky note and put it up with the rest. .
- Some of the things we do for passive programs include QR Code scavenger hunts, activity sheets (mazes, crosswords, coloring based on popular teen books or franchises), and we also keep a Spirograph set on a table in the teen section.

Additional Program Ideas

- I started a program called Prom U at Collier Regional Library. The program gives youth prom dresses and tuxedos and basically everything they need for prom. I feel like it helps teens in need. I feel like if I can expand this program to other libraries it would be great!
- We do a Fanfiction Night and the teens love it. We do it at the library after closing on Friday nights. It is a family night but the activities were designed by the Teen Advisory Group. WE do everything from the superhero obstacle course to Who is that Hero?
- We hosted TEDYouthDay at our Central Library and welcomed 100+ teens that day. We posted QRcodes and our social media IDs throughout the room and did incentives for teens that followed us that day. That launched our social media and promotions.
- Anime clubs, fashion clubs, gaming clubs are good for both male and female and all backgrounds

Feedback Mechanisms

- We do a "Would You Rather" poll each month.

Funding Ideas

- Working together (public and school library) could possibly help with the costs

Publicity/Marketing Ideas

- Our local schools are kind enough to announce our public library programs with their morning announcements and that works great
- You can partner with your local comic book store
- Make the teen computer screensaver the information on programs