

***Mix It Up: Spaces, Programs and Outreach that Engage Teens
Webinar Q&A***

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Questions from Live Demco Webinar, as answered by Cathy Cormier, The Mix Manager, San Francisco Public Library

Q: So this area is cut off completely from adults? Adults are not allowed to go into this area?

Q: Is your space truly for adults only? How do you handle informing patrons that the space is just for teens? Signs? How effective are your methods?

A: The Mix is part of the main library but has doors that separate it from the rest of the library. Adults who are not working at The Mix are not allowed to enter during public hours. During public hours, The Mix is truly teens-only. It is a continual challenge to inform patrons that the space is just for teens, and we use a variety of methods, including greeting each adult who enters The Mix doors. Many times it's a situation of the adult needing directions to another location at the Main Library, and sometimes it's an adult who wants access to the technology or books in The Mix (more about that below). Often adults come in who heard about The Mix and are curious or who potentially want to offer programs in the space. To address the interest of the general public and potential program facilitators, we offer a tour and information session for adults the first Saturday of each month. Because the branding of The Mix does not have the word "teen," we are updating signage so patrons know that the space is teens-only. In the meantime, we have been writing **Teens 13–18 Only** with dry-erase markers on the glass entrance doors, as well as using our Smart Board to display this information.

Q: Do adults have access in another part of the library to the audio or video resources in the Mix?

Q: Do adults have access to the Young Adult books?

A: Some of the technology resources at The Mix are available at other locations. For example, the Excelsior Branch Library has a sound recording booth, and The Bridge at Main Literacy and Learning Center has a 3D Printer. Adults can request books available at The Mix either online or in person at the Main Library Information Desk.

Q: Do you allow parents to stay with their kids?

A: We encourage adults to use other areas of the Main Library while their teens are visiting or attending programs at The Mix. That being said, we're flexible about this during a teen's first visit, as sometimes both a parent and teen will feel more comfortable learning about The Mix together.

Q: What are the guidelines for the teens to ensure they are behaving?

A: We did a [values activity](#) with the Board of Advising Youth (BAY) to create community values for The Mix right before it opened. If teens have a say in guidelines, they're more likely to abide by them. If you have not done a values activity with your staff or teen advisory group, I highly recommend it as a way to create buy-in for community values or guidelines. We used tools available from [Be the Change Consulting](#); they provide inexpensive professional development tools to promote positive organizational and youth development.

Q: I am a Youth Services Supervisor at one of our local libraries. I have been in this position for 2 months. I have a middle school right next door. These children come as soon as school is out. I have been providing programs for them, but they don't have their own space. How can I convince my director that the teens need their own space?

A: I would suggest sharing the 3-page Executive Summary of the [Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action](#). The full report makes the case to a wide variety of audiences for the importance of providing integrated library services to teens. The end of the [full report](#) has *Questions to Guide Local Assessment and Planning*, including these questions about teen spaces:

- Does your library have physical and virtual teen spaces where teens can be not just consumers, but also creators?
- Are your teen spaces technology-rich, thus bridging the access gap that many of today's teens still face?
- Do your teen spaces provide opportunities for teens to work collaboratively and individually?

These tools may be helpful for starting a conversation with your library director.

Q: Can you define/describe a space audit. What's the process for doing one?

A: I was hired for my position after the space audit was completed. In general terms, a space audit consists of determining the effectiveness of a space in providing service value. In the process of committing to building a new Teen Center at SFPL (The Mix), the Library identified several possible locations in the Main Library that could be renovated, and ultimately the current location was decided on. [This presentation](#) explains more about SFPL's process in determining the location. In searching for information about space audits and libraries, I found a [Public Library Space Needs and Alternatives Study - An Outline](#) that may be useful.

Q: I'm rather envious of how many teens you seem to have that want to participate. I'm in a tiny community at a VERY SMALL library with a teen room, and I can't get a single teen in this town interested in a BAY or Teen Advisory Board or even to show up for programs like henna tattoos, book clubs, or anything else. How can I get teens to be interested? Feeding them isn't working :(

A: Really it's that teens want to hang out in the space once they learn about it. And the opportunity for paid stipends helps generate interest in the Board of Advising Youth (BAY). That being said, we have challenges getting teens to attend programs, which is why we have been trying to flip the model to teen-driven programs. Arguably, a space like The Mix can more easily accommodate the on-demand interest of teens who may want to use the audio studio or 3D printer, for example. SF is a big city, but we find that teens have so many choices that we too struggle with getting them in the door. Can you partner with counselors or teachers at your local high school to help brainstorm services the library might be able to provide teens that are not offered elsewhere in the community? Maybe host a meeting with adults who serve teens in your teen room to build awareness? Do the teens (and educators) in your community know about the free online resources available with their library card? There was an article recently about how an [LA public library card can save thousands of dollars a year](#), and even if your library doesn't have all these resources, you likely have some that could be highlighted as beneficial to teens.

Q: How do you find teens who may be interested in helping out in the library? We rarely even see teens, and when we do, they don't want to hang out. We are a ONE-ROOM library in a mall. Help!

A: We do outreach to schools via e-mail contacts and try to communicate through the district-wide school online newsletter to students and parents at middle and high schools. If your mall has a social media or online presence, can you use this resource to communicate that you're there and seeking teens to help out at the library? Even if teens don't see this, their parent might.

Q: I have had some teens suggest programming ideas at an advisory board and when I did the program they wanted, hardly anyone showed up. Do you have any advice on how to counter this problem?

A: We struggle with the process and practice of teen-driven programming. Teen-driven programming is a practice that requires much patience, and it helps to consider the process as workforce development. My suggestion is to have teens participate in all aspects of the process of program planning, including scheduling, publicizing and facilitating the program. It is definitely challenging to have teens involved at this level, but they gain insight into how much work is involved, and when not as many people show up as they would have liked, they learn what they could have possibly done differently.

Q: How many hours per week do your libraries allow teen volunteers to participate?

Q: What kind of stipend do you provide for teens? How many hours do they work to get the stipend?

A: While there's no official maximum number of hours a volunteer can participate, the maximum amount is generally 10 hours a week or 2 hours a day. For summer reading program helpers in the past, the maximum a youth could volunteer each day was 2 hours.

For teens that receive a stipend, the amount they receive is based on how many hours they participate each month. The stipend is calculated at an hourly rate, and we try to match the current minimum wage. BAY members fill out a timesheet each month, and checks are mailed to their home address. Some organizations pay a stipend at the end of a youth's participation or in two installments (for example, for a school-year program, one in December and one in May).

Q: If you have a game night/tournament how do you run the program?

A: We participated in International Games Day, but did not have very many people attend. For future game nights/tournaments we will probably bring this to the BAY to brainstorm ideas about how to generate more interest.

Q: Could you talk more about the Design Camp?

A: The Design Camp was a two-day focus group where teens were asked what kinds of programs and spaces would interest them.

Q: I would love a little more information about the Charrette or design activity model. What kind of prompts did you use to get the thinking going, and can you tell me a little more about the structure?

A: The Charrette/design activity consisted of two sessions where architects/project designers met with teens to determine space design of The Mix. The first session started with an icebreaker (3 teams doing [The Marshmallow Challenge](#) to start the conversation about design thinking). The 20 teens that participated formed 3 different groups, each with a different architect or project designer, and each group made 3 collage posters to represent general areas of the space. A month later, the second Charrette consisted of the designers presenting 3 different designs for The Mix. Teens broke up into 3 rotating groups to determine which elements of the designs they liked best. At the end of the second session the teens reconvened to collectively determine which elements of each design should move forward to the final conceptual design, which was presented two weeks later.

Q: I'm curious about the button maker area. Is that a passive program that's sitting out for teens to use whenever? If so, have you encountered any problems with it, such as abuse with what they make (inappropriate images, etc.)?

A: The button maker is in a bin in the Makerspace. We allow teens to use it by themselves after a brief training. We have not encountered abuse or inappropriate images, though some of the images come from discarded graphic novels and are thereby graphic (especially some of the Marvel comics). That being said, our buttonmaker is 1 ½ inches, so the images are quite small. We purchased our buttonmaker from Dr. Don's buttons, and the [Starter Kit for 1 ½ inch buttons](#) is currently \$340, including the buttonmaker and supplies for 250 buttons.

Q: Can you define HOMAGO?

A: Our Learning Lab friends at the Free Library of Philadelphia created a helpful presentation that defines HOMAGO. HOMAGO stands for Hang Out, Mess Around, Geek Out. The term was conceived by Mimi Ito, and you can read a free download of her book, [Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media](#).

As The Mix is a new space, we're firmly in the HO or Hang Out of HOMAGO, and our Learning Lab friends at [YOUmedia Hartford have a nice definition](#) of how we hope to achieve HOMAGO at The Mix.

Q: I would like to find out more about numbers on the BAY and also number of teens attending programs.

Q: On average, how many teens use The Mix daily?

A: We currently have 35 teens on BAY. Between 20 to 60 teens use The Mix daily, depending on programs.

Q: Is the grant through MacArthur available for public libraries?

A: Unfortunately, the [Learning Labs Grants Project](#) has ended, but I suggest visiting [Get Started With YOUmedia Learning Labs](#) for ideas and checking the [IMLS Grants Website](#) frequently for new opportunities.