Find Poetry: Using Found Poems in School and Public Libraries to Enhance Student Creativity and Writing

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Abstract

"Found poems" are a type of poetry "created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them as poetry by making changes in spacing and lines, or by adding or deleting text, thus imparting new meaning" (*Wikipedia*). Almost anything can be used to create a found poem, and found poetry can be used in a variety of ways to enhance learning. By using primary sources or textbooks, students can use found poetry as a way to summarize, to analyze, to present facts, to organize information, to create new ideas, and to enhance classroom learning. Examples of ways to use this type of poetry in the classroom and library are provided. Use of found poetry will be linked to cognitive development and educational theory.

A WEEK OF READING

The beginnings:

The moon was low in the sky, as bright and weightless as a lover's promise.
I'm a walker, not a runner . . .
The dogs were going to be a problem.
Reassured that it was worth what it cost to have it.
Folks don't understand unless it happens to them.

The endings:

I don't have a choice;
I started reading our true story out loud.
But I don't care because I'm so happy, I don't want to let go.
A moment of prayer settles them down.
And that was good.
And so am I.

Found poems are a type of poetry "created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them as poetry by making changes in spacing and lines, or by adding or deleting texts, thus impacting new meaning."[i] This definition, from *Wikipedia*, is both a simple yet complete description of this type of poem. Poets.org, the website of the Academy of American Poets, expands on this basic definition: "Found poems take existing texts and refashion them, reorder them, and present them as poems. The literary equivalent of a collage, found poetry is often made from newspaper articles, street signs, graffiti, speeches, letters, or even other poems. A pure found poem consists exclusively of outside texts: the words of the poem remain as they were found, with few additions or omissions. Decisions of form, such as where to break a line, are left to the poet."[ii]

Almost anything can be used to create a found poem—text from newspapers, magazines, or books; shelves: library, store, pantry; products in your grocery bag; items you find around the house; signs and billboards as you are travelling; graffiti; brand names. And there is no limit as to where poems can be found. (Note: All poems used in this paper are original efforts by the author of the paper.)

For example:

BATHROOM SHELVES

One a day
All Natural, Heart Healthy
Eliminates odors
Daily Moisture.

Caress(ing)
Suave

Equate with Pert
Cool (mint)

An Edge.

Found poems can be used in a variety of ways to enhance learning. By working with primary sources, literary works, or textbooks, students can use writing found poems as a way to summarize, analyze, present facts, organize information, create new ideas, and review for tests. Beyond these, found poems can support learning, improve reading skills, help with retention of factual information, and spark creativity. And sometimes they can be used for simply the joy of writing. Libraries, both school and public, provide a perfect venue for the introduction and writing of found poetry. With their abundance of print resources, and the knowledge and enthusiasm of librarians, libraries can provide a wealth of resources for writing as well as a forum for presenting the found poetry written by their patrons.

A Brief History of Found Poetry

Little information is available about the history of found poetry, but perhaps the beginnings of this form of poetry can be found in the style of writing called "*Ekphrasis*," which is the practice of writing descriptively about works of art.[iii] This form of poetry began with the ancient Greeks and has continued through history in the works of poets such as Ovid, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, Yeats, and others.

It is also closely related to "research poetry" in which a qualitative researcher "sorts out words, sentences, and passages" to synthesize meaning.[iv] Melissa Cahnmann points out that "developing a poetic voice prepares scholars to discover and communicate findings in multidimensional, penetrating, and more accessible ways."[v] As to be expected, this form of disseminating research information is not without controversy.

Franz Stanzel points to the Dadaist movement in the visual arts as the predecessor of found poetry, with its use of found objects like coat racks and stovepipes presented as art.[vi] Manina Jones explains, "The resurgence of interest in Dada and the revival of Dadaesque techniques in artistic endeavors like Pop Art and Collage in the 1950s and 1960s was coincident with the popularizing of the found poem."[vii]

Defining Dadaism[viii]

Not officially a movement,
*It is artists **not** artists,*
*It is art **not** art*
And this makes perfect sense.

But really
Dada was a literary and artistic movement, not form,
That began when the horrors of
WWI were being played out

On the front lawns of citizens.
Intellectuals, mostly French and German,
Congregated in Zurich
And undertook the time-honored tradition of
Protesting.

They were fed up
And their art became
Mild obscenities
Scatological humor
Visual puns
And everyday objects.
Shock art.

The public was outraged.
The Dadaists found this encouraging.

And the name?
"Dada" means "hobby horse" in French;
To others it is baby talk.
And this made sense to the intellectual artists.

Found poetry is also closely related to the pop culture of the mid-1900s and to Pop Art in that both rely on found and everyday objects. Foss explains, "Found poets used the 'semantic fallout' of popular culture."[ix] In 1969 George Hitchcock published the first anthology of found poems, *Losers Weepers: Poems Found Practically Everywhere.* Two of the best known and most prolific found poets of the 1960s and 1970s were Bern Porter and Robert Colombo.

The first dictionary definitions for found poetry or found poems were included during the time period from about 1965–70 and were related to the term "found object." Early practitioners of what is now considered found poetry include James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot.

According to poets.org:

> Many poets have also chosen to incorporate snippets of found texts into larger poems, most significantly Ezra Pound. His *Cantos* includes letters written by presidents and popes, as well as an array of official documents from governments and banks. *The Waste Land*, by T. S. Eliot, uses many different texts, including Wagnerian opera, Shakespearian theater, and Greek mythology.[x]

Annie Dillard, essayist and Pulitzer Prize winner for *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, published a book of found poems in 1995, *Mornings Like This: Found Poems*, featuring poetry derived from "an eclectic range of books."[xi]

A Brief Overview of Learning Theory, Cognitive Development, and Found Poetry

Most educators, whether teachers or librarians, find it valuable to link any activity, especially those they deem as "fun" activities, to learning theory, educational objectives, and best practices. The writing of found poems can be linked to multiple learning theories to support their use in classrooms and library programming. Since most educators are familiar with these theories, only a brief description of them and their relationship to found poetry will be given.

Louise Rosenblatt and Transactional Reading Relationships

In her essay "The Acid Test for Literature Teaching," Louise Rosenblatt points out that "for the readers, the literary work is a particular and personal event" and that "students must be helped to have personally satisfying and personally meaningful transactions with literature."[xii] Even more so: "Sensitivity to the different aspects of a literary work is highly desirable, of course, but when the eye of the reader is focused on the work as personally perceived, he will not march impartially through a set of items or apply again and again a single type of analysis. He will be aglow with a particular response. He will need to register this response, to get the particular quality of it. And he will need to reflect on it. For it will be the result of the way the work fits into his own past experience of books and life."[xiii] And this is what found poetry can be about—allowing a student to interact with a text on a personal level and to make sense of the text.

Reader Response Theory

Both of the above quotes by Rosenblatt also relate to Reader Response theory, and Rosenblatt is credited with "the paradigm shift in the teaching of literature away from viewing the text as authority to a view that focuses on the readers' relationship to the text."[xiv] Reader Response theory is closely related to Constructivist learning theory, and writing a found poem is another way of responding to literature that emphasizes the reader's relationship to the text.

Constructivism

Constructivist theory defines learning as an "active, constructive process" in which "people actively construct or create their own subjective representation of objective reality."[xv] Since new information is linked to prior knowledge, mental representations are subjective. Important contributors to constructivism include Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and Jerome Bruner. Constructivism is closely related to Instructional Design, Problem-Based Learning, Cognitive Apprenticeship or Scaffolding, and Carol Kuhlthau's Information Search Process and Guided Inquiry. Writing found poetry helps students construct meaning from curriculum by using class lectures, textbooks, research, novels, and primary sources to present information in new and meaningful ways.

Experiential Learning

While David Kolb is generally accredited with popularizing it, Experiential Learning has its beginnings with John Dewey and Carl Rogers. Often called "learning through experience" and "learning by doing," a key element of this theory is that learning takes place when the student is involved in the process. By involving students in direct experiences related to "real world problems," the librarian or teacher becomes a facilitator in the learning process.[xvi] These learning

experiences should include reflection, analysis, and synthesis, all of which can be accomplish by writing found poems.

Bloom's Taxonomy

While not actually a theory, most compilations of educational theory include Bloom's taxonomy of learning. In 1956 Bloom led a group of educational psychologists in the development of a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. This taxonomy included, starting at the most basic level: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In the 1990s a new group of cognitive psychologists updated this theory for the twenty-first century and changed the taxonomy from nouns to verbs. The new taxonomy includes remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.[xvii] Using found poetry in the classroom or as a creative activity uses the highest levels of the taxonomy, especially the highest level: creating.

Higher Order Thinking Skills

While based on the work of most educational psychologists, the concept of higher order thinking skills is most often linked to Bloom and his taxonomy. Using found poetry as an instructional strategy not only helps with these higher-order thinking skills but also with the lower-level skills of remembering—which includes defining, duplicating, listing, recalling, repeating, reproducing, and stating—and of understanding, which includes classifying, describing, discussing, explaining, identifying, reporting, selecting, translating, and paraphrasing. Found poems can also be used to apply information, the third stop on the pyramid.

Beyond Educational Theory

Going beyond educational theory and practice, generalizations can be made about the effectiveness of using found poetry as a classroom tool:

1. Writing found poetry encourages critical thinking and creativity. Since the poet must weigh words and evaluate their meaning in context and form, found poetry requires the writer to synthesize the meaning of the primary source in such a way that word and phrase placement provides emphasis and clarification.[xviii]
2. Found poetry increases connections to content. The expository writing found in most textbooks requires readers to be able to identify key terms and academic vocabulary. The clarifying nature of found poetry lends itself well to the development of these skills.[xix] It also reinforces the skills of interpretation and comprehension as choices must be made about words and phrases from the original source.
3. Found poetry can lead to lasting connections with the subject matter. When students "make words their own," they also create a connection to the text.[xx] This text no longer becomes something just to memorize for a test.
4. Found poetry expands and deepens student engagement with language as it is done in collaboration with text.
5. Found poetry can lead to improved comprehension and increased academic language acquisition. Because students who construct found poems are encouraged to examine and

reflect on the language of the author, the borrowing of text leads to a form of scaffolding. Writing about a specific subject matter positively affects learning and serves as a "gateway" to comprehension.[xxi]

6. Writing found poetry in content classrooms helps students become more attentive to the language found in text materials and the process of writing a found poem allows the student to access information in ways that make the information uniquely their own.[xxii]

Cognitive development closely relates to learning theory in that developmentally humans are able to master certain tasks and understandings at different stages usually related to their age. This idea closely relates to constructivism in that activities need to be appropriate for the age and maturity of the students. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" is often used as a standard for understanding the concept of cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."[xxiii] Using found poems as a basis for problem solving and developing skills uniquely supports cognitive development.

Other psychologists such as Piaget and Bruner have their own theories of the stages of cognitive development, but most focus on the concept that students need to be physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to accomplish certain goals and tasks successfully; however, this is not accomplished independently but with the help of peers, parents, and teachers.

A Summary of Found Poetry and Learning

A student needs to:
Transact
Construct
Experience
and Bloom

With the help of a "teacher" who
Designs instruction
Institutes problem based learning
Scaffolds
and guides inquiry and the research process

Found poetry can help create learning.

How to Write a Found Poem

By thinking of found poems as literary collages, writing becomes simple. Unlike many other poetic forms, there are no rules as to rhyme, rhythm, or structure. Basically, the writer uses someone else's words to create a new structure, in this case a poem.

The writer gathers interesting, appealing, or important words from another source, and the list of sources never ends. Anything that has words or that can be named with words is fair game for a found poem. When working with a classroom or other group of children or young adults, start with familiar items—the arrangements of books on a library shelf, the playlist on their electronic device, the contents of their purses or backpacks, the student handbook, their horoscope—and have them arrange this into a poem. Once you are comfortable with the concept, you can use it as a way to connect students with curriculum. A good description of introducing found poems as part of a classroom lesson can be found at http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/foundpoem.pdf; the sponsor of the web page, the NCTE—National Council of Teachers of English—and author Patricia Schulze have made it available for download and use.[xxiv]

Copyright Issues

Copyright can cause issues if found poems are published. For the most part, this can be avoided by citing the source at the beginning or the end of the poem. The type of found poem being published also impacts copyright. If the poem takes phrases or sentences from a variety of sources, no real issue exists. A poem that uses one single copyrighted text proves to be a different issue as questions of fair use come into play. Legally, though, no law exists that deals with found poems and copyright. Authors often see this as an issue of plagiarism, but poets see it more as a form of creativity. If publishing student poems either online or in print, the recommendation stands: cite the source from which the poem originated. For more information, see "Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Poetry"[xxv] developed jointly by the Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property at Washington College of Law, American University, the Center for Media and Social Impact at American University, the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute, and the Poetry Foundation.[xxvi]

Found Poetry—A List of What I Read and What I Used in Writing This Paper

Words mostly
Book titles
Favorite quotes
Advertisements
Conversations—perhaps those overheard
Text messages
Research
Websites
Interviews
A dissertation and a thesis
Wikipedia
Database articles
And whatever words made me think.

Suggestions for the Use of Found Poems in the Classroom or Library

The list of possibilities for using found poetry is extensive; an Internet search or a database search will show many ways to integrate it into a classroom or learning situation. While a number of these uses are presented below, the suggestions are not exhaustive and should only serve as ideas to get started with the process.

General Uses

The NCTE website gives a complete lesson plan developed by Carolyn Wilhelm with reproducibles for use with younger students kindergarten thru third grade (ages 5–9) that could be easily adapted for older students.[xxvii] This activity works equally well in the classroom or as a library activity. In public libraries, this could be incorporated into Summer Reading programming with kids writing found poetry from a book they have read.

Jennifer Isgitt of Fort Worth, Texas, has a blog, *The Empathetic Teacher*, for high school educators. Her structured approach to writing found poems provides instructions for introducing found poetry into a classroom. In her example, she uses a magazine article to as a starting place.[xxviii] Again, this approach to writing found poems would work well beyond any classroom and could be used to show children and young adults how to find keywords and important information from primary and secondary sources and how to use found poetry as a note-taking tool. Public librarians could use this with their programming for the home-schooling population.

Social Studies and History

The U.S. Library of Congress resource kit on using primary sources has one section devoted to found poetry. It states:

> Retelling history from one's own perspective can help them (students) make the learning their own. While there are many ways that students can "retell" history, one effective strategy is the writing of "found" poetry. Using rich primary sources texts, students select words that allow them to retell the historical content in poetic form.[xxix]

Public libraries with historical document sections are a perfect venue for using found poetry to "retell" history. Another activity could involve interviewing people about a historical event or period and presenting the interviews as found poetry. This could develop into a multi-generation programming activity in almost any type of library (Grandparents' Day is the first holiday that comes to mind).

In an article in the *Geography Teacher*, Ellen Foster outlines a lesson using a geography connection with high school students. The lesson involves reading an article and dividing students into groups to write found poems using the article.[xxx] In a library setting, as either a library lesson or a programming activity, atlases, state or country books, cookbooks, or newspapers from different cities or parts of the country could be substituted.

English and Language Arts (Adaptable to Any Language, of Course)

Barbara Groome and Jo Peterson Gibbs provide a lesson plan for using picture books for writing found poetry that includes educational objectives. While they structure this as a group project, it could easily be adapted for individual writing. It is also appropriate for a library setting and would be a good way to introduce found poetry or to just have fun with picture books and poetry. For public libraries, this would be an inexpensive but fun parent-and-child activity for library programming during Poetry Month in April.[xxxi]

An older article by Don Phillips in the *English Journal*, "Let Found Poetry Help Your Students Study Literature," illustrates several ways that he used found poetry as part of several different lessons and shows the versatility of the format.[xxxii] He used found poems as both a culminating activity and as a review of learning. His ideas are easily adaptable as a book club activity as a way to discuss a book or as a culminating activity after the book has been read and discussed. It can also be used as a note-taking tool to highlight "beautiful language" or important events.

Another article from 1989 in the *English Journal*, "Let Found Poetry Help Your Student Find Poetry" by Nancy Gorrell, explains how she used found poetry to introduce her poetry unit and divided the process into three lessons.[xxxiii] While the unit as introduced in this article may not be as applicable to a library setting, it can be shared with teachers, used as a resource, and it would also work with homeschooler programming.

Science and Math

Fine Lines, a blog by Christie—no last name given—discusses a found poetry project that she did with discarded science textbooks. The science poems in "Found Poetry Becomes Art" are fascinating, and this activity could work with any print source .[xxxiv] This would be a good activity to use with weeded math, science, and computer books that would allow students to cut out the words they want to use.

There is also beginning to be some interest in combining poetry and science in STEM and STEAM programming. One school district that has done this successfully gives some good ideas as to how this can be accomplished in "Combining Robotics with Poetry?: Art and Engineering Can Co-Exist."[xxxv] With so many libraries, both school and public, doing STEM and STEAM programming, this short article gives some rationale for combining poetry with science as well as some basic ideas that could easily be expanded to many topics.

A Few Concluding Words

Found poems are a type of poetry
"created by taking words, phrases,
and sometimes whole passages from other sources
and reframing them as poetry
by making changes in spacing and lines,
or by adding or deleting texts,
thus impacting new meaning."

Almost anything can be used to create a found poem

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—text from newspapers, magazines, or books; shelves
—library, store, pantry; products in your grocery bag; items you find around the house
—signs and billboards as you are travelling;
—graffiti;
—brand names
—and there is no limit as to where poems can be found.

Found poems can be used in a variety of ways to enhance learning.
And sometimes they can be used for simply the joy of writing.

Notes

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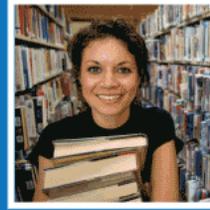
Future of Library and Museum Services Supporting Teen Learning:

Perceptions of Professionals in Learning Labs and Makerspaces

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Abstract

Learning Labs and Makerspaces provide informal learning spaces in which teens can create, invent, socialize, and work with mentors and peers. These innovative learning spaces facilitate teens' authentic and social learning experiences, promoting their twenty-first-century skills and multiple literacies. Little research has focused on the challenges, achievements, or goals of professionals in these spaces. This study addresses this gap by studying the experiences and perceptions of learning space professionals. The research question is: What are the challenges, achievements, and goals perceived by professionals of learning spaces in libraries and museums? We discovered the following challenges: having enough personnel, obtaining necessary funding, changing the perceptions of library and teen learning, being able to develop a vision, and providing consistent access to the space. Achievements included: increased teen engagement, staff developing necessary skills, and changing the perception of what a learning space can provide. Goals emphasized the desire to sustain and expand learning space programming, as well as other professional goals. Evaluation approaches included mainly outcome measures, though some output measures continue to be used. Lastly, implications for practice and LIS education are discussed.

Introduction

As the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) points out, "Teens are not simply older children."[i] Teens have unique developmental characteristics and information needs, as they are undergoing significant changes physically, cognitively, and socially.[ii] Different development theories[iii] suggest key developmental tasks for young adults, including the Five I's—identity, intellect, intimacy, integrity, and independence.[iv] Young adults also have a range of information needs, such as information relating to peer, family, and other relationships; popular culture;

emotional needs; physical health and safety; emerging sexuality; consumer needs; academics; leisure activities and interests; careers; and college.[v]

Libraries play a significant role in supporting these unique and holistic needs of young people. They provide resources and services to engage, serve, and empower young adults, who are defined as people ranging from twelve to eighteen years of age. Nowadays young adults comprise a significant portion of library users. The 2012 U.S. Public Library Survey reports that young adult programming made up 8.9% of all programs offered in public libraries. There were 358,342 programs for young adults across the nation and 5.7 million attendees at programs for young adults.[vi]

Contemporary young adult library services encounter innovative changes in step with current social and economic factors impacting teens. The increasingly diverse demographics of teens, their use of technology, and multiple literacies required to be successful in this global world call for a paradigm shift for libraries and teen services. The YALSA's national forum report, *The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action*, addresses an urgent need of "widely different types of services, access, collections, space, and staff than ever before."[vii] Moving from a traditional concept of information gatekeepers, young adult librarians are called upon to play an active role in promoting young people's twenty-first-century skills, improving their performance and participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics),[viii] and helping students meet national standards such as the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner,[ix] Common Core,[x] and the Next Generation Science Standards.[xi]

Central to this paradigm shift is viewing the library as a community learning hub. This transformation is not confined to teen services but applies to all library communities. The Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) *Creating a Nation of Learners: Strategic Plan 2012–2016* suggests its vision for libraries as "essential and trusted components of the nation's learning ecosystem providing opportunities for lifelong, 'life-wide' learning."[xii] Placing the learner at the center, the goal is to provide engaging experiences in libraries that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society.

In response to the changing information landscape as well as national and global demands, transformative library places for teens, called Learning Labs or Makerspaces, have been developed over the past few years. These are informal learning spaces where young people explore both traditional and digital media, interact with mentors and peers, and engage in expressive and creative projects. Learning Labs are guided by research-based frameworks called HOMAGO and Connected Learning. HOMAGO refers to "Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out," which describes different levels of youth engagement in digital media.[xiii] Connected Learning is a learning approach in which "a young person is able to build the skills and knowledge to pursue a personal interest or passion in an environment that provides support from friends and caring adults, and is in turn able to link this learning and interest to academic, career success or civic engagement."[xiv] Often created in libraries, museums, and science centers, Learning Labs are characterized by a dedicated physical space where youth and mentors of diverse backgrounds engage in Connected Learning through digital media, creative programming, and partnerships among different youth-serving community organizations.[xv] The oldest Learning Lab in the United States is YOUmedia at the Harold Washington Library in

Chicago, which was launched in 2009.[xvi] Inspired by YOUmedia, IMLS and the MacArthur Foundation supported development of twenty-four Learning Labs for teens in libraries and museums across the country in 2012 and 2013.[xvii] Currently, an increasing number of libraries and museums throughout the United States offer teen learning spaces and programs that reflect Connected Learning principles.

Makerspaces, also referred to as Hackerspaces or Fab Labs, have been growing quickly in the library community to provide places for people to create, invent, learn, and socialize.[xviii] The Maker Education Initiative supports student-centered, project-based learning that stems from the pedagogical tradition of learning by making and through apprenticeship.[xix] The Maker Movement inspired a community of makers who bring the DIY (Do-it-yourself) mind-set to cutting-edge technologies and tools that allow people to turn their ideas into real objects. In Makerspaces, physical objects, DIY, and engineering approaches are pronounced, while Learning Labs were originally designed around the research and frameworks on youth and digital media. Although Learning Labs and Makerspaces come in different shapes and sizes, both types of informal learning spaces facilitate teens' authentic and social learning experiences, promoting their twenty-first-century skills and multiple literacies. Also they offer a range of tools, mentors, and programming opportunities for community teens, who might not otherwise be able to afford these technologies or have access to the mentors' expertise.[xx] While libraries and museums have been earnestly developing these programs, few empirical research studies exist to investigate how effective or successful these services are to the populations they serve. Even less is known about the competencies or skills needed by information professionals who work in these environments, or the challenges, benefits, and goals they encounter while developing these informal learning spaces.

Research Question

Investigation of Learning Labs and Makerspaces is important in order to understand current changes that young adult library services are facing. These exemplary spaces represent the shifting perception and needs of libraries as learning centers. The YALSA National Research Agenda addresses one of the research priority areas of informal and formal learning environments for young adults.[xxi] There is, however, a lack of research exploring the current state of informal learning spaces for teens in libraries and museums. This research project attempts to address the gap by studying the experiences and perceptions of learning space professionals. The research question that guided the study is as follows: What are the challenges, achievements, and goals perceived by professionals of learning spaces in libraries and museums?

As an increasing number of libraries are currently initiating, continuing, and/or expanding a learning space, it is critical to build upon and learn from experiences of other librarians and museum professionals in this area. Those interested in library/museum learning spaces can learn from challenges that other professionals have encountered so they do not repeat the same mistakes. Identifying what facilitated achievements in different learning spaces helps professionals develop strategies for successful learning spaces and allocation of resources. In addition, learning about goals and visions that learning space professionals set for themselves informs envisioning the future of library spaces and services for teens.

Literature Review

Because Learning Labs and Makerspaces are currently such hot topics in the library community, the practitioner literature is replete with anecdotal reports on developing these informal learning spaces. Topics include, for example, (1) history and models of Makerspaces and Learning Labs;[xxii] (2) informal reports of how specific libraries or museums developed their Makerspace or Learning Lab;[xxiii] (3) advice, lessons learned, and resources for how to start a Makerspace or Learning Lab;[xxiv] and (4) suggestions for technology use and sample projects.[xxv] See Koh and Abbas for a more comprehensive review of the practitioner literature and major themes therein.[xxvi]

There is little empirical research reported on Learning Labs or Makerspaces. Only a small body of research exists that investigates the state of library learning spaces. For example, the Maker Education Initiative, as part of the Maker Ed Open Portfolio project, conducted a survey of fifty-one Makerspaces to learn about where they are situated, what populations they serve, which activities, key skills, and practices they attempt to cultivate in their spaces, and their documentation and portfolio practices.[xxvii] Burke's study measured the extent to which these innovative learning spaces are being developed in libraries in the United States and seven other countries, or their plans to develop one in the future.[xxviii] The study also investigated issues related to funding, programming, and the top technologies used by library Makerspaces. An important area of research, and one that speaks to the shifting paradigm being experienced by youth services and libraries, is the authors' study to determine the competencies and skills needed by information professionals who work in these informal learning spaces.[xxix] In addition, we elicited the challenges, achievements, benefits, and goals perceived by information professionals who have been instrumental in developing Learning Labs or Makerspaces. In this article we report on the findings related to the challenges, achievements, and goals.

Only one somewhat similar research study was found that is related to the focus of this article, the challenges and achievements encountered, as well as the strategies used by those who have developed these learning spaces. Slatter and Howard interviewed three managers in Learning Labs or Makerspaces in Australia to determine the benefits and issues they encountered in developing their learning spaces. They reported on the benefits of learning spaces in libraries including: (1) increased community engagement, for example, opportunities for community members to engage with new technologies and connect with others over shared interests; (2) partnerships with new entities such as universities, local schools, teachers' associations, and local hackerspaces, or with large corporations or government interests; (3) unfettered access to new technologies (such as 3-D printers) for community members who otherwise would not have access; (4) new learning opportunities for users and staff; and (5) future-proofing the organization, which represents the changing shape of libraries. Each of the above-cited benefits illustrates to the community the importance of the library and how it meets their needs.[xxx]

Other anecdotal accounts reported in practitioner articles noted that additional benefits of library learning spaces are: (1) increasing opportunities for community members to engage with and learn from one another, as facilitated by the library staff;[xxxi] (2) promoting educational benefits through programming that supports the forty developmental assets of teens by providing a space for creative activities;[xxxii] (3) empowering youth through peer-to-peer training opportunities;[xxxiii]

(4) providing intergenerational learning experiences;[xxxiv] (5) initiating a new vision of services and resources for teens; and (6) increasing civic engagement of teens as they tackle problems in their own communities.[xxxv] These learning spaces have served as a catalyst for a robust new vision of collaboration and network development within their community and as a means to form new relationships with teens.[xxxvi]

In terms of challenges or issues encountered as managers developed these learning environments, Slatter and Howard reported three challenges including: (1) budgetary constraints as managers sought funding to purchase the technologies, often relying heavily on partnerships with other organizations; (2) concerns over copyright, liability, ownership, and legal implications, such as who owned the item created in the library, what, if any, copyright restrictions had to be resolved, as well as the general need to understand the legal implications related to products produced in the library; and (3) showing the value and relevance of the learning space and gaining support from the community and staff as the library moved into this new direction of service.[xxxvii]

Other studies agreed with Slatter and Howard's findings but also expanded on the challenges.[xxxviii] For example, developing and providing programming required libraries to expand their definition of literacy to include "transliteracy," or the ability to read, write, and interact across a range of platforms and tools.[xxxix] Still other research reported worries about ceding space and authority to others, such as community mentors, as often these programs rely on mentors or experts from the community.[xl] While these were presented as challenges in the practitioner literature, we also recognize them as promising and innovative changes that might require changing perceptions of library and museum practices and missions, which could be viewed as a challenge *and* an opportunity.

Strategies for addressing these challenges were also reported. For example, Slatter and Howard felt that forging partnerships with outside agencies was vital for connecting with the community and maintaining the viability of the space. They also stressed the importance of making the community aware of the space through advocacy and awareness, and for creating a successful blueprint based on their experiences of developing the learning spaces and then sharing it with others.[xli] Other studies mentioned the importance of having liability and use agreements in place for participants to sign;[xlii] enlisting a core of volunteer mentors;[xliii] involving teens in the design/planning/implementation of the Makerspace;[xliv] and exploring innovative approaches to reimagining space for more effective use.[xlv]

Methods

I. Research Design

This article reports the findings from a series of in-depth interviews with professionals in Learning Labs and Makerspaces in either a public library or museum in the United States. This is the first phase of a two-phase research project, comprised of Phase 1: in-depth interviews, and Phase 2: an online survey. The results of the Phase 1 interviews were used to design a questionnaire for an online survey of information professionals who work in these emerging learning environments. This paper reports findings on one aspect from Phase 1, focusing on the

following research question: What are the challenges, achievements, and goals that are perceived by professionals of learning spaces in libraries and museums?

II. Participant Recruitment

The study used the purposive sampling approach, that is, selecting information-rich participants who can provide an in-depth understanding on the study topic.[xlvi] The researchers reviewed publicly available resources such as the YOUmedia Network, the directory of Makerspaces, and lists of the recipients of the national competitions to design twenty-first-century Learning Labs in museums and libraries by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to identify leaders and pioneers in Learning Labs and Makerspaces in the United States. An effort was made to include professionals from libraries (the sample only included public libraries) and museums to include both Learning Labs and Makerspaces. Potential interviewees were invited to participate via e-mail. Nine professionals agreed to participate in an interview session. Each participant received an IRB-approved information sheet, which provided an overview of the study and contact information for the researchers. At the time of the study, all participants lived in the United States and were all English speakers. See tables 1–7 below for participant demographic information.

Table 1. Organizations

Organizations	Number of participants
Library	3
Museum	5
Science Center	1

Table 2. Types of Learning Space

Spaces	Number of participants
Learning Labs	3
Makerspaces	4
Both	2

Table 3. Participant Gender

Gender	Number of participants
Female	5
Male	4

Table 4. Participant Education

Highest Degree	Number of participants
Master's	8
PhD	1

Table 5. Education Disciplines

Disciplines	Number of participants
Library and Information Science	3
Museum Science	2

Education	1
Film and TV	1
Museum Science & Art	1
History	
Geology	1

Table 6. Professional Experience

Years of experience	Number of participants
0–5 years	3
6–10 years	2
11–15 years	1
16–20 years	2
More than 20 years	1

Table 7. Experience with Teens

Years of experience	Number of participants
0–5 years	4
6–10 years	3
11–15 years	1
16–20 years	1

III. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in summer 2013. Interview questions addressed learning space professionals' perspectives and experiences, such as challenges, achievements, success criteria, goals, and any other compelling issues in Makerspaces and Learning Labs. See table 8 for sample interview questions. Nine individuals were interviewed using either Skype or Google Hangouts, or by telephone, depending on their preference. The sessions were recorded using software called Audio Hijack Pro. The length of each interview varied between thirty to seventy minutes depending on the degree of detail in each interviewee's answers. All recordings were then transcribed.

Table 8. Sample Interview Questions

Categories	Interview questions
Challenges	• What are some of the challenges that you face regularly in your position? • Describe one of the toughest challenges you've encountered in your current position. How did you respond? What did you do, and what was the outcome?
Facilitators	• Describe the outcome or achievement that you are most proud of. • What resources—both in your library/museum and for you specifically— were needed to make it possible?
Success Criteria/ Goals	• What criteria are you using to measure success in your job? Is it, for example, based on outcomes, results, or benefits? ○ How does your manager evaluate your success? ○ (Or if the interviewee is a director or manager) How do you

	evaluate your librarians' success in the Learning Lab/Makerspace?
	• Give me an example of an important goal you had to set as part of your role. Was this goal attained? Why or why not?
	• What are your professional goals for the next year or two? What are you hoping to achieve for your Learning Lab/Makerspace?
	• How do you see your position evolving, both professionally and organizationally?
Issues	• What would you say is the single most important issue that your Learning Lab/Makerspace is facing?

IV. Data Analysis

The data included the audio recordings from the interviews and transcripts of the recordings. The transcripts from the interviews were analyzed using the web-based data analysis software Dedoose, using the method of content analysis. The researchers used inductive category development,[xlvii] a specific form of thematic analysis, to analyze the transcripts. Each researcher developed a set of codes to apply to the data set. They then compared the codes and developed a master set of codes. Both researchers then coded all transcripts, refining the coding scheme as necessary, and compared the results. This method provided direction for the analysis, thereby increasing the likely conceptual relevance of the resulting coding scheme to the research question.

Findings

In this paper we focus on the findings related to the challenges, achievements, and evaluation approaches used by participants to measure success in their programs, as well as the goals they had for the emerging learning spaces and their personal and professional goals. Findings related to the competencies, skills, and their perceptions on the role of higher education in preparing them for working in a Learning Lab or Makerspace were reported in an earlier paper.[xlviii]

I. Challenges

The interviewees addressed several challenges they regularly encounter working in a Learning Lab or Makerspace, including issues related to personnel, funding, advocacy, sustainability, visioning, and others.

Personnel

Interviewees addressed the critical role of mentors in these learning spaces:

[A challenge is] getting connected to people who can act as appropriate mentors for the teens in the space. Because right now what happens is the teens enjoy having the space open, and they come down and grab a snack and hang out and do their Facebook on the computer. But they're not really getting engaged in the programing. And so I think . . . that reflects an absence of mentors with whom they would identify. And so part of our challenge is to find some folks who can serve that role.

Interviewees reported that it is challenging to recruit the right personnel for the learning space, such as finding a staff member who understands and embraces the Maker movement or a mentor who (a) has technical skills, (b) can facilitate learning, and (c) is able to work with teens. An interviewee explained, "It is finding the right person that brings those skills, and it's also finding a person [whom] the teens [could relate to]—I might find somebody that has those skills, but if the teens don't recognize them as someone who can speak to them . . . [it would be a problem]."

Another interviewee concurred, saying:

> For me the challenge has been to find the balance of professionality and then what's called cultural competency. So people who relate to the teens on a level of . . . the teens, in terms of understanding popular cultural references, understanding their experiences, understanding the kinds of media they consume, dependent issues that they deal with or are interested in. Finding people who are like that, but also are able to work in a professionalized environment . . . that's a hard balance.

Interviewees also discussed staff shortage. Usually only a couple of professionals are dedicated to each learning space. These professionals experience work overload and have to rely heavily on volunteers. The manpower shortage makes it difficult for the professionals to have the time for professional development or reflection. Interviewees indicated that there was a lack of funding for staffing: "Grant funders are reluctant to fund staffing, because they don't want to be responsible for a position ending if they are looking to fund us for a year or something like that. So the biggest difficulty is advocating for staffing, finding a way to fund staffing I guess in general." Another interviewee agreed, saying:

> People are just shoveling money for buying this stuff. But nobody is shoveling any money or even thinking about money for staff and the people [who] actually facilitate the programs or [who] understand how to facilitate the programs. And that is something I find to be a huge challenge. Where we have the potential to be running programs and really diverse things, but with two people how could you possibly do it? But we don't have the funding to hire staff. Yet we have a thirty thousand–dollar laser cutter. That, to me, I find to be really imbalanced and a very difficult challenge.

Funding

Securing funding for continuing the learning space and program is an ongoing issue. Several interviewees were concerned about obtaining consistent funding, because many of the learning spaces had been launched with a grant-funded initiative, rather than regular full support. An interviewee said, "It is to convince funders that sustaining this work is useful—you can get people really excited about sponsoring a specific program for underprivileged youth or buying a specific tool, but to keep a Makerspace up and running takes a lot of effort."

Also, it is particularly challenging to find the funder who understands what the learning space professionals are doing and do not expect them to change their programs to fit the funder's own perception and mission. Regarding communicating the program outcome with a funder, interviewees stated:

So I guess that would be a specific challenge that is probably the hardest, which is just finding the right funders who understand that what we are doing . . . is progressive. . . . There's a lot of times they would rather have us do things that are a little bit more standard, because it's something they understand better.

I think . . . the programs are grant funded, [and] the people funding the programs seem to me . . . more concerned about quantity than they are quality. They want to make sure that they're funding a program that maximizes the amount of people it serves, as opposed to the actual experience that is presented.

Perception of Learning Spaces (Advocacy and Sustainability)

Interviewees reported that people's understanding and perception about learning spaces are a challenge, because the Connected Learning informal approach to learning is a shift from traditional formal learning approaches. An interviewee explained:

A lot of people don't understand that the philosophical approach that's being used in our program is really how people are learning now. And because of that I think it's challenging to me to raise funds or awareness about what we're doing . . . so, the informal learning, I think, is still something people are trying to get their brains around. To understand that there is rigor in informal learning, too, is something I think that's really challenging.

She suggested that without people's understanding and perception of this as the future of learning and the future of the institution, Learning Labs or Makerspaces would be seen as a fad that may pass, and they, therefore, would not receive stable, ongoing full support as part of the institution.

The professionals think that these learning spaces are becoming (or should be) part of an entire museum or library. But it is not always easy for professionals in learning spaces to make institutional changes beyond individual Learning Labs or Makerspaces when people do not understand the philosophy. According to an interviewee:

Something else we're going to be moving toward is incorporating [the Learning Lab] into the library culture. I think because we were so low on staff and because there was so much turnover from different people leaving [the Learning Lab], it's sort of been seen as a separate thing that just happens in the libraries. So we started like we're working with the Makerspace. We'll be working with our youth services teams moving forward in their meetings and just integrating ourselves into the rest of the library culture. In turn, having the libraries see we are a place that you can refer your teens to and we're part of the library.

Visioning and Focus

Makerspaces and Learning Labs encompass a range of programs, activities, and resources, which can be overwhelming for professionals developing and offering programs. For instance, Maker programs may deal with light circuits, sound circuits, motor and switches, robotics, sensors, rockets, musical instruments, textiles, mechanics, 3-D printing, electricity, paper/cardboard crafts, programming, woodworking, and more. The importance of having a focus was suggested:

> It's so broad that it's hard to maintain your focus on what your platform is and what you want to do, but then also accommodate what everybody else wants or hears or thinks about. I guess that would be one of the more difficult [things] . . . like maintaining your vision of what you want to do in your space, because every Makerspace is different and the vision of a Makerspace is developed around the person starting it or the person developing the program. . . . It's really keeping a focus on what you do well and developing programs from there. As your team builds, you'll be able to expand your offerings. But it's really just keeping the focus, I guess, is a long way to say that.

Interviewees concurred about the challenge of envisioning the future of the library and learning space in this changing landscape: "I think the single most [important issue] is to have a vision for the space and create things inside of the space that adhere to that vision. . . . But I think clarity in what you're trying to do and how you go about it, probably to me, is the most important thing." Another interviewee stated:

> I would say [a challenge is] responding to the Maker movement as a whole, or I would say that the question that comes up a lot is how are libraries remaining relevant. And for a lot of us, we're looking at ways to offer more educational opportunities, deeper experiences, where people are learning rather than people just coming to the library to get books and learning at home, we're trying to provide learning experiences here. . . . And we're definitely switching from doing less reference, thanks to Google and whatnot, and doing more programming anyway, and our collection development has become centralized, so we're spending less time on the collection and more time on programming.

Establishing a learning space's vision that reflects the community and implementing programs adhering to the vision can be challenging owing to funder's priorities:

> I think, I hate to say this, but I think funding is going to take us where we're going. Where the funders are focused on is going to be where our focuses are. We're starting to go into really, the Maker movement, both low tech and high tech, as you know. We're starting some STEM programming, too, which I think everybody's on board with, from the top to the bottom.

Another interviewee further supports visioning as a challenge:

> So what I have to be very careful of is people coming at me with a lot of money but asking me to do something very different than what our mission is, as a space. It's called "mission creep," [and] it means that another funder's mission creeps into yours and starts to dictate what your programming does. And so I guess I'm trying to figure out ways that

I don't start to add on or create new programs or change my programming, so that I can continue to keep my staff and my space funded. Because, basically, what we're offering that is unique is often being threatened by not being funded.

Access

User access creates a challenge when the learning space is only offered during a limited amount of hours. An interviewee said, "We're a portable show; we're only there one day a week. And so we're just moving equipment all the time, and so storing and transporting equipment is a challenge." Space is also an issue: "It's not a closed space. And the sound that comes into the space almost renders it unusable . . . in the way of having a discussion during our open hours." Another interviewee indicated that "[the city] has pretty bad public transportation, and especially teenagers are going to feel really isolated in some of these neighborhoods." Still another interviewee agreed, stating:

> How do we have access to those teens . . . because we don't have a five-day-a-week or seven-day-a-week drop-in site. We're only one day a week, and already we have teens saying, "If you only did it on Wednesdays then I could come, but Tuesdays I have band," and so the issues of accessibility I think are huge. We have two high schools in town, and right now we're only reaching students from one high school because they're the ones who can walk to the site. The other high school's ten miles away, and they can't get to us because our public transit is so bad. And so I think that is probably one of the biggest issues that we're struggling with at this point. It's great to have four or five kids show up and validate what you're doing and have a good time, but that's not really the number we had envisioned serving. So how do we drive those numbers up and how do we get more kids involved?

Other challenges mentioned include staying ahead of ever-changing technology, safety and liability, and working within the system of a large institution.

II. Achievements

Interviewees reported that the achievements they are most proud of are teens engaging in the program, staff development, and changing the perception in the institution. When asked what resources made these achievements possible, they listed funding, quality staff, community and institutional support, having a network of colleagues, and access to research and publications about experiences developing these learning spaces as important facilitators. The interviewees also appreciated funders who do not micromanage and who trusted and understood what they are doing. They said having a network between Makerspaces/Learning Labs is helpful. Research related to informal learning, such as HOMAGO or Connected Learning, has been a useful resource. An interviewee said having a regular meeting (such as a weekly meeting for reflection and discussion) was important, explaining, "We meet once a week for an hour and a half, and we show examples of what we're doing. . . . [We] try to share ideas [with] each other, reflecting back on what we've tried."

Teen Engagement

Most of all, the interviewees feel a sense of achievement when they see a change in teens, such as a cohort of teens who identify themselves with a learning space; kids who demonstrate what they can do with computers, digital media, and their own creativity; teens coming regularly to the program; and kids who are now contributors to the program. Interviewees said, "[It's] the fact that teens are feeling much more at home, they feel like this is a place for them."

> I think, you know when I see teens come in and then flash their membership card and walk through the galleries with their friends, I think that's a sign of success for us, because we just weren't seeing teens on their own in the galleries. We saw teens through school programs and school tours but nothing outside of that, and I think that's, you know, developing a major audience for an institution is really important, especially as an educator.

Staff Development

Interviewees are proud of growth in staff. Interviewees who are a manager/director said:

"The team of people that have grown into this. . . . It's important that the director of the project isn't the one who holds all the vision and it's shared"; "compiling a team of mentors who all seem to be on the same page and get along and get the idea of what we're doing and come up with really cool workshop ideas, and it's just basically getting it to where it kind of is now running on its own steam." They are also proud of their own skill development; the skill particularly reported was improvisation skills, "being able to [be] flexible and transform what you thought was going to happen to what is actually happening, and being comfortable with that. Developing that skill, I think, has been one of my greatest achievements and it's something I know that I didn't have before."

Changing Perception

Interviewees said there has been an institutional change: "Hearing other people at the Center [the library/museum] start to talk about the HOMAGO model and start to talk about having teens be creators instead of consumers. It's like a little virus that I'm spreading by having this project. And it's definitely changed the way we think about what we might do with teens and that we talk about what we might do with teens." Another interviewee said the underlying philosophy of learning started to percolate out into the rest of their organization, because she keeps pushing it. An interviewee concurred, "I think more and more now we've had people coming to us wanting to do this at other places," indicating that the learning programs, once perceived as being separate and limited within the learning space, are now spreading to different parts of the library and museum.

III. Evaluation Approaches

Outcome Measures

We asked the interviewees how they evaluate or measure success and achievement in their job or program. Interviewees agree that outcomes with teens who changed throughout the program or became deeply engaged in the learning space meant success/achievement to them. An interviewee explained:

> So my success measures are really outcomes with the kids. When I see two girls up on stage in front of a room full of two hundred and fifty people, and they're confident and well-spoken and able to do the program that we've asked them to put together for us, that is success to me. When the shy kid who isn't too good with his peers ends up being the geek who helps everybody else get online, that is success too. So I think a lot of those measures and looking at individual kids and what have they done that has changed them as a person, and what have they done to feel better about themselves, feel better about their ability to accomplish something, I think that is really what I look for as the ultimate measure of success.

Another interviewee provided an example of teens growing with the program, which demonstrates the success of their program: "Our biggest capstone that we have written into most grant opportunities has been creating teen mentors through graduating teens through [the] program and getting them involved as either volunteer mentors within the program or taking what they have learned here and connecting it to some kind of community service project."

Some learning spaces have strategies for measuring outcomes. A museum reported having a dedicated internal evaluation department, in which they conduct video studies and analyze different dimensions of learning. A library said that they had external researchers, but they started to work on their own set of outcomes based on twenty-first-century literacy, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

To demonstrate and evaluate their success, interviewees value stories and anecdotes. "Many times the stories are as powerful as the statistics when we're out talking to our supporters and trying to garner political or monetary support for the Center. So the stories are part of my evaluation as well." Statistics and numbers are part of it, but they don't tell the whole story, and the interviewees attempt to "keep track of . . . meaningful anecdotes of mentor-teen interactions and just sort of seeing what people are getting out of the program. . . . It's a deeper-level thing."

They obtain feedback from teens by asking questions about their experiences. Interviewees said that asking teens a question requires technique and skills and that they have developed strategies for obtaining honest feedback from teens: "I tend to ask them questions about it. . . . It is really challenging, I think, through surveys and interviews to get a wholehearted, real response out of somebody. But if you just let them ramble a bit, you're going to be able to pull a lot of valuable information out of them."

> I set up, what I call, the "confessional booth" . . . where they [kids] can go in there; it's totally a private space and they record. And I show them they hit this button to record and this one stops. And I basically prompt them with, "What did you like? What didn't you like? What would you change? What did you do? How did you do it?" and things like that.

Professionals also use observation to find evidence of learning as they run the program:

> When I'm working or in one of the programs and there with the kids in the library, I'm always assessing what the situation is. What's the vibe in the room, are kids happy to be there, or are they pulling people in, or are people pulling them out? And I have this sort of constant monitoring thread running in my head that comes from my experiences as a facilitator and my training as a facilitator, to constantly pay attention to what is going on in the room. And so I'm always gathering data from that as well, but it doesn't end up coded on spreadsheets.

Output Measures

Several learning spaces use output measures such as size of audience; however, the interviewees reported challenges in using this measurement:

> Because one of the hardest things . . . [is that] museums typically measure success through programs by numbers, how many people show up, but I don't think that's a measure of success, I mean it can be sometimes, but just because fifty people showed up doesn't mean everybody had gained skills or gained knowledge or had a good time even, and so it's usually sort of the basics of getting a little feedback from the participants, but then me having to be really reflective about what were the goals and did I achieve them.

Another interviewee stated:

> We haven't come up with an outcome evaluation tool to see if the programming that we've been doing with our digital media lab . . . has been life changing for any of the people who have taken part in it yet, or with the Maker programming either, so that is something we're going to have to look to for the future: . . . how to determine outcomes as much as it might be possible to do so.

IV. Goals for the Learning Spaces

In response to the question "What are you hoping to achieve for your Learning Lab/Makerspace?" most of the interviewees mentioned sustainability and expansion of the space/programs. Interviewees also addressed different personal goals as a learning space professional.

Sustainability

Interviewees discussed the sustainability of their spaces: "I think the goals that are set by the museum are basically to try to continue to run the program, to continue to tie the program into the museum, to continue to find ways connecting the program with the [name of museum] and some of its larger goals. And . . . a lot of it has to do with trying to sustain it"; "[to continue] finding the right way for the program to function week to week"; "[to] keep this space vibrant and alive for people as they come in to experience it for the first time, but to have our repeat

visitors feel that same way"; "[to] continue to fund the project, take some advocacy across the institution and of course [from] the board members."

Scale, Spread, and Expand

Beyond sustaining the existing space, the interviewees strive to expand the space and programming and disseminate programming to other libraries or museums.

> The goals for my programming are to kind of scale and spread what we've been doing. So that means that we would like to start to figure out ways to generate income through the curriculum that we're writing and have it be used by others and . . . disseminated by the [name of museum]. We'd also like to figure out, . . . again, [how to] stabilize funding for the staff and kind of run ourselves as a pan-institutional entity that can . . . work as, not necessarily work as a contractor, but work as advisors for other people developing programs like ours or get ideas from us in terms of what we've been doing with the teens.

Another interviewee concurred:

> [Our goal is to] offer some programs either as outreach in the community to vulnerable neighborhoods, and/or do some more programming in our branches to involve them a little more particularly in digital making, digital media making, but maybe also do some hands-on workshops as well. So kind [of] expanding out beyond the main library a little more.

To do that, interviewees mentioned they must find funding to hire more staff as well as maintain and expand partnerships. Other specific goals identified included the following: (1) to establish a virtual world and to get teens engaged in it, (2) to create STEAM-based learning, and (3) to provide new workshops. Their goals ultimately aim to "enhance and incorporate the individual learning process as much as possible."

Personal Goals

When asked about their personal goals related to their job in the learning space for the coming years, interviewees reported a desire to disseminate their experiences working in these learning spaces to a wider audience of their peers by publishing articles and presenting at conferences. They also stressed their need for more professional development related to the content areas presented in their programming, such as coding, using different technologies, and learning hands-on skills like building and using electric circuits. They also reported that they need to learn more managerial skills, including strategic planning.

Discussion

We believe the findings are important in understanding the current state of learning spaces in libraries and museums. The findings have implications for those who are in youth services, including library administrators, librarians, and Library and Information Science (LIS) faculty

and researchers, to overcome challenges and facilitate achievements identified by the learning space professionals.

The findings agree with our assumption about the importance of qualified professionals for the sustainability of learning spaces and programs. Interviewees reported that finding the right personnel for the learning space is one of the biggest challenges because the position requires "the balance of professionalism." Successful professionals in learning spaces must have the ability to learn and enjoy learning new things, adapt to changing situations, facilitate learning, and have necessary skills in technology, management, program development, and grant writing. They must be able to collaborate with others and have cultural competency to serve diverse populations and relate to teens.[xlix] LIS school faculty, library administrators, researchers, and librarians themselves must make an effort to equip learning spaces with professionals with these qualities.

Library and Information Science (LIS) faculty should review and update their curricula to educate pre-service librarians based on the competencies, skills, challenges, achievements, and goals identified in this study.[l] Most importantly, LIS schools must be a place for students to hone their ability to learn. Students can be introduced to the concept of Personal (or Professional) Learning Networks[li] and start developing or expanding their own learning network. It is critical to teach the theoretical foundations of user needs and behaviors, learning theories, teen developmental characteristics, and cultural competencies—that is, understanding the needs of diverse populations and different learning styles. Students should be taught about evidence-based practice, from identifying community needs, to evaluating a program and assessing teen learning, to applying the assessment results to improve programs. Finally, LIS schools should provide opportunities for students to enhance their technology literacy. Instead of focusing on technical skills, however, it is more useful to promote students' ability to learn new technologies because technologies continue to change rapidly.

Besides formal education, learning space professionals grow and continuously learn on the job. Professionals obtain the needed competencies and skills through networking (e.g., at conferences and in discussions with professionals from other learning spaces), learning by doing on the job, and self-education (e.g., online training resources, reading articles, and reflection on what they have learned).[lii] Library administrators must support and highly value professional development of their employees. Libraries are a learning community for everyone, including their users and workers. Professionals should be encouraged to participate in conferences, webinars, and meetings to share ideas and practices. They must also be given time to absorb relevant research and theories and to reflect on their own practices.

The interviewees stated that having a network of colleagues working in learning spaces and sharing ideas and experiences greatly facilitated their achievements. Library associations and their divisions—such as YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association), AASL (American Association of School Librarians), and ALSC (Association for Library Service to Children)— must provide leadership in promoting a network of informal learning space professionals. It is also desirable that libraries and a range of other institutions serving youth create a stronger sense of community and collaboration/networking opportunities. Learning space professionals must be able to identify resources in their community beyond libraries and network with them. For

example, the Da Vinci Science Center in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a Learning Lab, led the creation of the Mentor Allentown Coalition, which leverages existing programs and the local workforce to serve community teens.[liii] Not a single library, school, or museum can provide all the expertise in a range of making and STEM activities. Establishing connections between different learning organizations is essential.

The study found that a key challenge was people's lack of understanding and perception about informal learning spaces. Many of the challenges that the interviewees experienced seem to originate from the perception that these learning spaces are "special" or "separate" spaces from the rest of the library/museum. This prevents regular and ongoing funding for a learning space and results in limited personnel and access (hour/space). More research on informal learning spaces is beneficial for informing people about the importance of them and helping professionals advocate the need for these learning spaces and this new form of informal learning. It is a clear gap that currently little research has been conducted in and about informal learning spaces. In particular, research on teen learning in library and museum learning spaces is needed to determine the effectiveness of the current approach. An interviewee mentioned that the most common question she receives is whether or not teens are really learning with all the technologies in the learning space. While professionals working in learning spaces have been witnessing positive changes in teens, research findings that show what and how teens learn in learning spaces will contribute to sustainability and expansion of informal learning spaces in libraries and museums.

More evaluation and outcomes-based research is required for professionals to conduct evidence-based practice. Findings of this study illustrated the power of anecdotes and stories. Interviewees explained that they ask teens questions and observe activities for learning assessment. Learning space professionals also document learning activities, programs, and outcomes; related practices are found in the Maker Education Initiative Open Portfolio Project.[liv] Overall, however, findings revealed a need for developing and implementing a systematic way of measuring outcomes with teens.

Limitations

The findings presented in this paper are not generalizable owing to the small number of participants and the nature of qualitative study. These exploratory findings were intended to inform the development of Phase 2: an online survey of professionals in learning spaces across the country.

Conclusion

Learning Labs and Makerspaces are exemplary spaces to demonstrate how young adult librarians strive to remain relevant in this age and to promote teens' learning. As technologies and situations are rapidly changing in this area, professionals must actively pursue learning and networking opportunities and become lifelong learners. All other stakeholders—including library administrators, Library and Information Science (LIS) faculty and researchers, and organizations related to libraries and informal learning—must support youth service librarians' ability to facilitate learning in this new era. Perhaps supporting professionals' continuous learning would

be one of the most effective ways of facilitating teens' learning and promoting libraries as a community learning hub.

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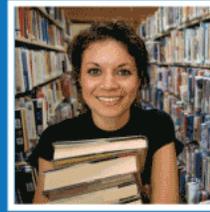
Book Tweets and Snappy Reads: Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens

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Abstract

Booktalking is an essential professional competency for young adult (YA) librarians, as it connects teen readers with text and literature for the purpose of instilling viable lifelong reading practices. This article introduces "Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens" (BEMT), a collection of research-supported booktalking techniques that have been effectively taught across two ALA-accredited Library and Information Science (LIS) programs within the past decade. The BEMT techniques promote booktalks by taking into careful consideration contemporary teens' social developmental multitasking literacy skills across various technology platforms including computers, smartphones, and social media.[i] The research explored in this work substantiates ways in which YA librarians can more effectively engage with these young audiences such that their approach is more appropriately aligned with young adult developmental needs. In an era where teen readers are looking to connect with multimodal texts that are engaging, relative, and edifying, I posit that the BEMT techniques discussed here are a renewed approach to booktalking that promotes a vital competency of contemporary YA librarianship.

Keywords: teens, young adults, literacy practices, adolescent development, booktalking, readers advisory, techniques, literature.

Introduction

As we enjoy this second decade of the twenty-first century, teens and young adults are cross-multitasking via oral, print, and electronic environments, as they have more than just the telephone to enact and perfect the loquacious interpersonal skills that are so vital to their ongoing human development.[ii] We see how digital technologies have become intimately embedded within school and public library interactions in various formats such as texting via cell phones and popular social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, and Facebook. As a result, YA librarians are constantly seeking ways to effectively connect with youth readers via these contemporary outlets.[iii]

Research shows that one outcome of all these digital ways of interaction is that young people have become short-attention-spanned multitaskers.[iv] This means that new ways of reading and interacting with text have emerged in schools and libraries that are challenging traditional norms about what it means to engage with reading and the desire to read. This is an important concern because we know that in spite of electronic access to texts that seemingly having a deep impact on human interaction and discourse, two things are true:

1) There's still a significant percentage of the population that is *not* plugged into technology (i.e., the digital divide).
2) Reading text in print format is still fundamental to human growth, cognition, and interaction, and is *preferred* by YA readers.[v]

In YA library services, the competencies we enact to encourage teens to read include reference interactions for school assignments and readers advisory (RA) conversations for leisure reading. We know that fiction reading is important for teen brain development;[vi] however, today's YA literature often embeds digital dialogue (e.g., text messages and e-mails) as part of the narratives in novels, comics, and other literary works.[vii] How teens socially interact is reflected in texts published for their readership. Modern YA publishers take into account teens' tech savviness and their quick multitasking habits of information gathering and processing, packaging narratives in formats that facilitate these new ways of reading. In turn, we librarians must now (re)consider the ways in which we seek to engage teens with modern YA literature. Book-review-length booktalks are no longer a convincing sell. The times call for booktalk strategies that reflect the creativity, clarity, brevity, and speed that today's teens employ when interacting socially and online.

Research Questions

For RA purposes, we librarians utilize the booktalk as a methodology for informing young readers about current offerings in YA literature. Just as teen interactions with text have evolved, so too must librarians' ways of promoting texts. In this work, I introduce booktalking techniques that are supported by adolescent development and literacy research and that uniquely contemplate developmentally appropriate styles to engaging the multitasking, short-attention-spanned, digitally distracted teen reader[viii] with relevant literature in multimodal ways.

Further, this article explores questions about competencies needed by librarians for booktalking with twenty-first-century YA audiences. Literacy practices of today's teen invariably include some kind of technology, including locating, accessing, and even the reading of books. I posit that real-time, digitally-based interactive practices can be exploited within booktalking practices to productively engage teens' interest in reading current literature in print format.[ix]

The six foundational booktalking techniques that are introduced in this article have been successfully taught to pre-service librarians within two ALA-accredited LIS programs over the past decade. The techniques sit on the shoulders of traditional booktalking practices, but are structured to reflect an evolution in booktalking that coincides with contemporary YA developmental assets and needs that have become decidedly immersed with the effects of digital

data on reading practices. To honor the new ways in which today's youth see, hear, and engage with text, we librarians must consider the following questions:

a) What kinds of techniques can we employ to booktalk YA literature with today's teens in ways that can truly entice them to want to read classic and contemporary literature in various formats?
b) What techniques can librarians employ that take into respect the tech-connected attention spans of teens that is quick, short-handed, and punchy, yet meaningful and fulfilling?

Admittedly we have a plethora of research and how-to manuals telling us how to booktalk to the YA audience.[x] However, these techniques continue to resemble adult book reviews rather than creative literary introductions that cleverly highlight engaging YA books. Booktalking manuals continue to show us how to write out and perform booktalks that are overly long and that overly reveal plot and content (i.e., spoilers). I contend that booktalk manuals are still being written for the adult librarian and his/her professional preferences, rather than for the YA reader with contemporary interests and tastes. Stemming from my own professional experiences with classroom school visits, middle and high school library visits, as well as readers' advisory conversations, the following techniques were devised in response to what ultimately worked to capture the engagement of the twenty-first-century teen audiences that I encountered. This approach invariably led to increased circulation of YA materials, as well as new teen patrons visiting the library during after-school hours. Additionally, the model I am proposing has been successfully implemented in LIS YA courses I taught across two ALA-accredited programs over the past decade.

Literature Review

The literature that frames and supports the theoretical basis for "Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens" (BEMT) techniques comes from adolescent literacy research and insights from the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS) as applied to LIS research. This literature review takes into account ways that teens respond to new literacy practices of the twenty-first century, where digital technology has become an embedded aspect of daily living. LIS research charges librarians to broaden their ideas about what it means to read and to be a reader, thus encouraging us to embrace new literacy practices (that are invariably digitally embedded) as part of our professional practices.

With the digital age, texts have become more complex.[xi] In fact, the International Reading Association (IRA) cited the 1999 adolescent literacy report by Moore et al., where they explained that literacy and comprehension strategies for adolescent learning should include the following:

- Activating their prior knowledge of the topic and text.
- Predicting and questioning themselves about what they read.
- Making connections to their lives and other texts and to their expanding worlds.
- Summarizing key ideas.
- Synthesizing information from various sources.

- Identifying, understanding, and remembering key vocabulary.
- Attending to text cues and features to recognize how a text is organized, then using that text organization as a tool for learning.
- Organizing information in notes, graphs, and charts, or other representations of key ideas.
- Searching the Internet and other resources for related information.
- Monitoring and judging their own understanding.
- Evaluating authors' ideas and perspectives.[xii]

The IRA says that Moore et al.'s ideas should be incorporated by educators so that "all teachers can effectively support adolescent learners as they learn from all kinds of texts by teaching these general strategies through the discipline-specific print and non-print materials that continue to expand rapidly."[xiii] I posit that we librarians are the key population of the educator pool to employ this stratagem in school media centers and public libraries for middle and high schoolers, as well as academic libraries for college-attending young adults.

Because many of today's young adults (millennials) are born with access to a digital world, twenty-first-century literacy can be defined as the ability to efficiently navigate texts, symbols, languages, and interactions across print and electronic platforms, in various flexible formats. Today's teens regularly engage in traditional reading practices with print texts, as well through online activities that include social media websites and discussion forums that may expand their personal reading experiences.

In his work with teens, Brandt explores teen responses to their own literacy practices to reveal how "literacy has 'piled up' in various forms and practices and 'spread out' into various life domains."[xiv] We must also take into account that such varied literacy events simultaneously occur across diverse social, cultural, and global contexts. Within all these considerations, teens' approaches to reading typically involves reading a little of many things in many formats, quickly, and only once. Keller calls this kind of fast-paced multitasking a "culture of acceleration," where "literacies appear, change, [and] merge with other literacies, and fade at a faster rate."[xv]

This fast-paced multitasking approach has become integrated into all of our daily lives, ever changing and flexible, rarely static.[xvi] Along with these immediate social and online interactions, the measured pace of leisure reading still allows one to immerse her/himself into a deeper reading stance that counters these newer literacy practices. In her report on the effects of technology on multitasking habits of today's teens, Hill asks the essential question, "What type of [library] programming will attract and hold the attention of the multitasking teen?"[xvii] Responding to this challenge, Koss provides contexts in which contemporary YA literature that features digital media practices among characters can be used to engage teen readers. Koss asserts that incorporating digital media in YA fiction narratives can enhance teens' reading comprehension, vocabulary, and language development.

YA librarians seeking to connect with teen readers need techniques that balance fast, social-digital literary practices with slower, interpersonal reading skills. With the BEMT techniques, we librarians can offer carefully composed booktalks that respect the time-strained realities of teen lives along with their desire for meaningful narratives to connect to for their own self-directed

purposes. Librarians can incorporate creative use of language with technology and social media to create a booktalking repertoire that will engage teens via video booktalks and book trailers, blogged booktalks, and multimodal booktalks using web-based technology (e.g., booktalk presentations as Prezis).[xviii] Well-planned, strategically organized, and succinctly presented booktalks that respect the complex ways in which teens engage with texts today can be vital in teaching teens how to strategically engage with building their own literary lifestyles.[xix]

Romer's work with researching teen health information behavior informs the need for booktalks that appeal to the adolescent developmental effects of joyful experiences, immediate gratification, and peer approval.[xx] For many teen readers, exploring a new author or topic or genre is a risk, as they head off into unknown territory. Romer sees risk taking as an important developmental aspect of decision making for young adults.[xxi] Considering which texts to integrate into one's literary lifestyle requires librarians to actively and energetically involve teen readers in their booktalk presentations.

Further, Romer's research reveals that "risk taking leads to a reduction in impatience as assessed with a delay discounting task."[xxii] This means that if teen readers are piqued to take a chance on reading something new, there is a good probability that they will also have the patience to read the text deeply, particularly when peer influence is compatible with their interests (i.e., teens co-reading authors, titles, and genres). Booktalks that are clear and succinct yet require engagement/response from teens can help with the development of patience and possibly lead to slow, measured reading that elucidates deep meaning and sense making. Thus, with socially and developmentally appropriate booktalks, librarians can create a safe social environment where teens are encouraged to make decisions for themselves in terms of choosing ideas, concepts, and narratives that pique their interests and expose them to new ideas.

In 2012 Purcell et al. spearheaded a Pew study where they surveyed over 2,400 American public middle school and high school teachers to understand how they perceive their students' research capabilities in this digital age. Overwhelmingly, teachers found that even advanced students are easily distracted by the multitasking, multimodal digital world in which we live. Two-thirds of the teachers reported that search engines have "conditioned students to expect to be able to find information quickly and easily" and that "doing research" has become an exercise of fast-paced searching as opposed to the slower, more measured approach of pre-Internet generations.[xxiii] Teachers also observed that students exhibit low patience for locating information, and that given the heavy electronic environment where information overload is commonplace, today's teens are also "an easily distracted generation with short attention spans."[xxiv]

Berg encourages librarians to embrace these "new literacies" because they are participatory, collaborative, and interactive within the author-reader dynamic more so than ever before.[xxv] Berg's study involved working with eight teens in a public library as they sat at computer workstations and interacted simultaneously across computers, cell phones, and face-to-face. The study analyzed the teens' conversations over a two-year period to learn how the computer was used as a "cultural tool" to mediate teen talk.[xxvi] Berg learned that the teens used online work in the library in a variety of responsive ways: referential, authoritative, experiential, expressionistic, and mechanical. Berg also noted that how teens interact out of school, at public libraries, closely mirrors and thus reinforces teens' in-school literacy practices. In this vein, developmentally and

interactively appropriate booktalks can be a meaningful lens through which teen readers can engage with YA librarians and the books they are promoting. In-library practices that involve all the platforms that teens engage in (technological, textual, and social) can assist teens with positively and enthusiastically engaging in all kinds of meaningful reading.

In light of this evidence, librarians must meet teen informational needs in formats in which teens themselves communicate. Cart challenges librarians to reconsider what they mean when they say "reading" while working with teens who are constantly ensconced in a world where reading involves print, mobile, gaming, and social media platforms[xxvii]. As various formats in packaging and content emerge, as genres blend and intersect, and as self-motivated pleasure reading interests and tastes coincide with required assigned readings from school, our booktalks must involve as many of these aspects of today's teens' reading repertoire as possible.

Booktalking Methodology for the Twenty-First-Century Teen Reader

Booktalks are known to have the potential of being effective library marketing and readers advisory tools for all reading audiences. In the public library, booktalks are done in-house, as part of readers advisory with patrons or as a program for visiting class or community groups. Booktalks are also a good outreach tool for when you visit school libraries, classrooms, senior centers, and other community outlets. Booktalks encourage and excite readers to come to the library to check out books. The more we librarians stay tuned in with the constantly evolving ways of reading that teens employ, the better equipped we are to serve our communities.

The purpose of a booktalk is to introduce your audience to books at your library. Booktalking with teens in today's harried technological world can, at times, seem like a lost cause, as the constant blurb talking of books can quickly become boring. However, with careful planning and creative strategies that respect teens' fluidic literacy practices, a YA booktalk can actually capture young people's attention and draw them into meaningful responsiveness to reading.

Booktalks are like infomercials for library materials (and librarians), which means that they are not meant to be long treatments, reviews, or retellings of narratives, but instead must be quick, impactful *performances*. Booktalks can be effectively performed to include various formats such as books/eBooks, audiobooks, movies, and music and book CDs—virtually every media format available can be effectively booktalked.

Contrary to popular belief, young adults today do enjoy being read to. Read-alouds appeal to teens' cognitive developmental need to hear and play with language, speech, and vocabulary.[xxviii] However, nuisances must be noted, as younger teens have shorter attention spans and need constant intrigue to keep them interested, while older teens like to express their "knowingness" and appreciate opportunities to interact with you during the booktalk. Don't be surprised if older teens interrupt your booktalk and change its flow. Engage with your audience and booktalk their requests.

As the librarian, you must appear to enjoy reading aloud *short, interesting* excerpts of books to your audience; making sure that the passage you pick are intriguing in ways that are appropriate for the book and the audience. For example, for younger audiences, reading an excerpt of a book

where the character shows emotion will keep them interested, especially when you apply a little drama to your act for emphasis and impact. For older teens, reading aloud allows them to rest from active thinking and processing and gives them the treat of absorbing information without consequence. Excerpts should provoke the imagination with visuals of action, scenery, or character development, and your booktalks need to have intentional tonality and pacing to create the scene you are conveying. Booktalking to older teens can serve as an emotional release, giving them a needed reprieve from being responsible for the information they are receiving (as opposed to facts on top of facts at school). You can use booktalking as a segue into storytelling for young adults.

By and large, booktalks are best when creatively written, practiced, and then *performed*. With the Internet as a major avenue of interacting with (and redefining) text these days, a well-written booktalk is just as big of a performance as a live booktalk. The following booktalking techniques I've devised to engage millennial teens (BEMT) are tried-and-true from my years of frontline librarianship, as well as a decade of my teaching these techniques to pre-service librarians in the classrooms across two ALA-accredited LIS programs. The techniques primarily take into consideration the factor of *time* in respect to teen attentiveness and engagement. Case in point, Reynolds and Givens specify that we speak an average of 130–190 words per minute.[xxix] I have found that booktalks longer than 60 seconds risk losing the interest of twenty-first-century teens.

So the question becomes: how do you grab their interest in a book within a minute? To engage millennial teens, the BEMT techniques are as follows: *Book Tweet*, *Wrap Back*, *Open End*, *Graphic Form*, *Snap'n Read*, and *Power-Full Points*. Each BEMT technique averages a word count of 50–155 words, which means that when spoken/performed, they average between 30–60 seconds per booktalk. BEMT techniques can be combined with one another to create a viable repertoire that can remain fluid as you add and subtract booktalks from your program. For example, you can create your own repertoire where you open with three *Book Tweets* to set the pace, then one *Snap'n Read* to engage visualization, followed by perhaps two *Wrap Backs* to pique interest, added with two more *Book Tweets* (again for pacing), one *Graphic Form* for visuality, then close out with an *Open End* to leave your audience intrigued. With practice, you can booktalk ten books in ten minutes.

These time-effective techniques provide time for audience participation and interaction. With a good 10-to-15-minute presentation, you can catch *and keep* the focused attention of your young audience, allowing time for them to ask questions about titles that interest them, to share narratives they personally relate to, and to incorporate other activities to further connect teens with the library (e.g., trivia games, prizes, announcements, etc.). Further, these techniques can become an iterative repertoire where librarians can add more booktalks as they create and learn to supplement their program, and these booktalks can be spliced, remixed, and used at anytime, anywhere, for readers' advisory.

Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens: Introducing the BEMT Techniques

The following are examples of each BEMT technique in the series (with word counts).

BEMT Technique #1: *Book Tweets*
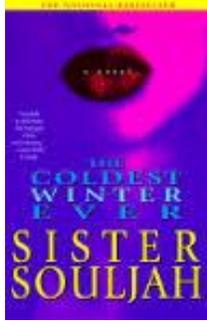
Book Tweets are one-to-two-line hooks that leave the audience wanting more. In this vein, the booktalk has to be a punchy, cleverly written appeal to the linguistic savviness of the teen mind. *Book Tweets* work well with teen audiences because they are quick and impactful: a lot is said with few words. This approach allows teens to view their YA librarian as someone who respects impatience (an aspect of learning delayed gratification)[xxx] as an ordinary aspect of language and social interaction.[xxxi] This *Book Tweet* example (fig. 1) is from the still-popular YA novel *The Coldest Winter Ever*, by Sister Souljah (New York: Atria, 1999):

Winter is the rough and tough princess of a Brooklyn drug dealer, who learns the hard way that life can be colder than she could ever be. [Character count: 137] *Learn how a princess is awakened to the real world where daily living can feel like "The Coldest Winter Ever."* [Character count: 109; total word count: 47]

In this example, I've combined two *Book Tweets* to illustrate how each tweet can work together or they can stand alone. *Book Tweets* are powerful because librarians can readily memorize them and be able to effectively present multiple titles over an extended period of time. Additionally, you can actually use the Twitter website (with the requisite 140-character limit) as a platform to microblog your *Book Tweets* (with an accompanying book cover image).[xxxii]

BEMT Technique #2: *Wrap Back*

It is very effective when you begin telling the highlights of a story, and then end the talk by connecting the booktalk back to the title. This is called the *Wrap Back* technique. Teens really enjoy the cleverness of this technique and tend to be more apt to remember the book when the title is introduced formally at the beginning of the booktalk and then interwoven into the conclusion of the booktalk. Another passage from *The Coldest Winter Ever* illustrates this:

> *Winter was born on a cold, cold night in the rough 'hood of Brooklyn. Perhaps that's why her mother named her Winter—so she would be able to face the cold realities of this hard-knocks world. . . . Midnight, Papa Santiaga's right-hand man, tries to steer Winter in the right direction, but she's not having it. Stubborn, scared, and reckless, does Winter desert her family and go for hers? Or does she move past her delusions and obsessions? Read this coming-of-age tale to find out if this young lady's life becomes "The Coldest Winter Ever."* [Total word count: 99]

Wrap Back is particularly appealing to today's teens because it can personify the book's characters, setting, and pace while using the contact-creating patterns of teen language.[xxxiii] *Wrap Back* is also a strong technique with its ability to pack a lot of visuality into a quickly conveyed summary of the novel's theme. (In the example, Winter is steered in a good direction but strays from the path.)[xxxiv]

BEMT Technique #3: *Open End*

The *Open End* technique is similar to *Wrap Back* except you begin the booktalk with a question (or questions) and end it with a question. This sample (fig. 2) is taken from the award-winning book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick (New York: Scholastic Press, 2007):

> *Well: Just WHO is Hugo Cabret? This novel takes you back in time with captivating black-and-white artwork that paces the story like an action movie. So even though this book looks thick . . . it reads . . . like . . . this [snap your fingers]. . . . Hugo is an orphan who becomes the clock keeper for a Paris train station after his father dies. Alone and on his own, Hugo meets a toy shop owner and his niece at the train station. The girl and Hugo embark on a series of adventures that leads them to a magician, a library, and the "father of science fiction movies"; all to learn that they, and the machine, are more connected than they realize. Ultimately through a series of fortunate events, you learn what is the secret to "The Invention of Hugo Cabret"?* [Total word count: 131]

Open End, like *Wrap Back*, appeals to teens' language tendencies known as "teen talk" or "teen speak."[xxxv] Today's teen speak (particularly among girls) is often lilting in tone with an open-ended cadence of expressions and sentences ending with a questioning tone, even if the statement is not a question. This technique serves to implant the book title into the booktalk as an expression of the story's plot. Both the *Open End* and *Wrap Back* techniques appeal to teen speak, as they are relatable to teens' everyday expression.

BEMT Technique #4: *Graphic Form*

Graphic Form is useful for alternative-format books such as graphic novels, epistolary novels, novels in verse, unique formulas, as well as nonfiction books.[xxxvi] For reluctant readers, it is key with this technique to *open the book and pass it around to the audience* so that they can see the format of the story. This approach encourages direct interaction with the audience, which is important for grabbing the attention of today's teen reader. An example of the *Graphic Form* using a unique formula novel (fig. 3) is Walter Dean Myers's *Monster* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999).
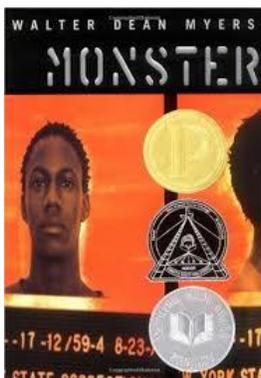
Steve is a sixteen-year-old teen growing up in Harlem. Much to his dismay, he finds himself with the wrong people, in the wrong place, at the wrong time—ending up in jail—and on trial for murder and attempted robbery. Steve chronicles his trial by [open the book to any page to show format] writing his experience in the form of a film script. Why? Because in truth, Steve is just a geeky kid who is a student in his high school film club. [Slowly keep turning pages to show the format as you pan it around the room.] Steve is scared, but he keeps writing. Steve is confused, but he keeps writing. Steve is sad, but he keeps writing. He's living a real-life horror movie. But he's just a kid. A kid who wonders . . . if he's . . . a Monster. [Total word count: 113]

When using the *Graphic Form* with graphic novels, it is important to play up the artistry of the illustrations; it's vital to not rush the presentation of the book. For nonfiction, play up colors, breakout boxes, and so on. For epistolary novels and novels in verse, pass the book around so the

audience can see the format. The *Graphic Form* appeals to visual readers and learners, particularly boys.

BEMT Technique #5: *Snap'n Read*

Snap'n Read is a creative read-aloud technique that appeals to auditory learners.[xxxvii] This technique gives an annotative snapshot of the book, then a short read-aloud of an attention-grabbing section (no more than a few sentences), closing with a statement that entices the reader to borrow the book. Figure 4 exemplifies the *Snap'n Read* technique via John Green's *Paper Towns* (New York: SPEAK, Penguin), 2009:

Why is Quentin following Margo around dressed like a ninja? Because he likes her, of course. And Margo is always on some solo adventure; but this time, she's included Quentin in her agenda. Then she disappears on him. At first Quentin thought Margo was just acting out of her usual awesomeness. But she didn't have to be gone long for the rumors to start . . . For example, check out what Quentin's friend Ben had to say [open book to page 93]: "I hear she's not answering her phone. . . . Someone else said she met a guy online"—to which Quentin says, "Ridiculous . . . She's somewhere by herself having the kind of fun we can only imagine." After considering possibilities for Margo's disappearance, Quentin and his friends set out to find her. Quentin worries: Is Margo having the best of times? . . . Or the worst of times? . . . Or if she is still here, on the planet, at all. [Total word count: 163]

The *Snap'n Read* is not a regular read-aloud, as librarians have to perform the dialogue (with alternating voices, emotive facial expressions, etc.), paint the scenery, and draw their audience into the book. The most important consideration for the *Snap'n Read* is that the "read" part must not be too long. Your booktalk must still fit within a 150–200 word limit, as you'll lose the attention of your teens if your booktalk is longer than 60 seconds. As the longest of the BEMT techniques, and for copyright purposes, excerpts for *Snap'n Read* need to be as short as possible.

BEMT Technique #6: *Power-Full Points*

Book covers visually pique interest and entice readers to notice a book. Thus, presenting a full booktalk repertoire as a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation allows for readers to become acquainted with various texts. *Power-Full Points* (fig. 5) is useful when addressing large audiences, such as school assemblies, colleagues at professional development workshops or seminars, or college groups. This technique is also useful because your books are on a USB drive or in the cloud, as opposed to having to physically carry books.

To get the most out of using presentation technology for booktalking, it is important to choose attractive, colorful book covers arranged clearly throughout the slides. Librarians have been using GoodReads as a reliable shareable source for book cover images on the Internet,[xxxviii] and author websites usually have images of their books' covers that can be copied. Book cover
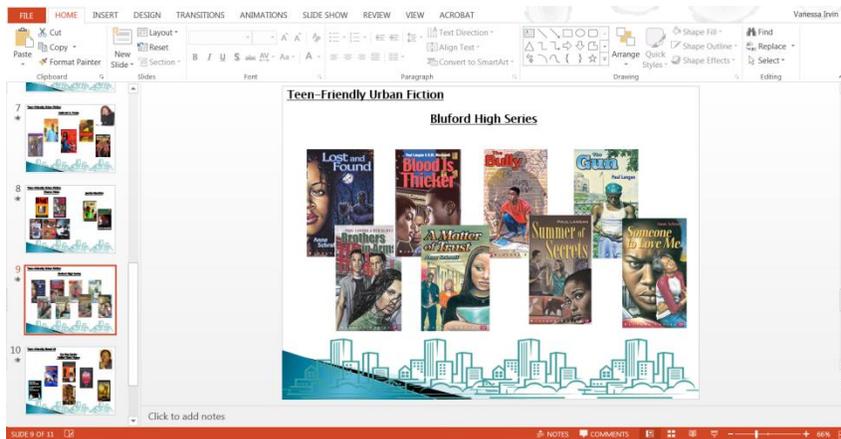
images for the purposes of commentary, review, or criticism only are usually covered by the Fair Use clause of the U.S. Copyright law.[xxxix]

Some best practices for effective *Power-Full Points* include (a) featuring keywords under select book cover images to prompt your memory about the book and to allow your audience something to cognitively engage them; (b) animating the entry of the book covers for pacing and visual appeal; and (c) arranging slides by genre for themed presentations. You can cover a lot of books using *Power-Full Points* because one slide can illustrate one theme. This technique satisfies kinesthetic as well as cognitive developmental needs of teen audiences, and the visual impact of a well-done *Power-Full Points* booktalk cannot be denied, as readers are easily engaged with the visual impact of the presentation (especially when combined with *Book Tweets*).

Discussion

The key to effective booktalking for twenty-first-century teen readers requires creative, yet impactful brevity. Because teens are such intense multitaskers, developmentally compatible booktalks can appeal to their intrinsic need for concise engagement to a variety of reading materials. Teaching pre-service YA librarians how to create these kinds of developmentally friendly booktalks has been challenging because as adults, we librarians are accustomed to writing book reviews, rather than employing more creative practices into composing professional booktalks. I've had LIS students pensively inquire, "We're free to *creatively* write the booktalk?" "Shouldn't this booktalk be longer?" "Just mention the first names of the characters?" I always remind student librarians that it is not about what we as adults prefer or want or are used to reading or hearing, but it is about what the teen reader wants and needs, *and* what and how they can hear, visualize, and articulate those wants and needs.

As noted, these BEMT techniques are really meant to be performed, rather than written. Of course, you'll need to compose your booktalks in order to articulate them, but once you have them written in your own professional notes for practice, it is really the *live performance* of them that brings them to life. In this digital age where teens are pretty much attached to social media interactions, it will be refreshing and challenging for them to interact with you as you perform these developmentally, socially, and cognitively appropriate booktalking techniques.

The key to embracing the BEMT techniques includes best practices such as writing out and rehearsing the booktalk, building a booktalk repertoire that includes a variety of the techniques, and being willing to perform the booktalks on video and in person. Potential for the ongoing professional practice of the BEMT techniques can involve compiling booktalks into a blog site

on Tumblr or Blogger, or perhaps creating Snapchat booktalks, or posting *Book Tweets* on Twitter or Instagram, and perhaps creating a Facebook page that features just the booktalks in multimedia format (images, videos, book trailers, etc.).

There is plenty of room for ethnographic research that gathers data on teen responses to BEMT techniques. In my LIS classes, my goal was to get student librarians comfortable enough to enjoy creatively writing short booktalks and feeling confident to present them in print as well as online via video. Future research will involve interviewing librarian alumni to learn if and how successfully they are employing the BEMT techniques.

My experiential evidence is the result of teen feedback when I would perform the techniques for them. My test groups were my core teens at the public library when I was on the front lines and in the LIS classroom. These informal focus groups were urban-based, crossing broad lines of academic achievement, cultural backgrounds, reading interests, and gender identities. The students attended a variety of public and parochial middle and high schools. One example of the most recent teen feedback I received was pertaining to the *Book Tweets* technique, which I originally called the *Book Whisper* to convey the catchiness of the quick booktalk as well as its intent to generate interest and intrigue for a book. However, it was teens who made it clear that the label *Book Tweets* was more appealing and relatable to them because they are very active on Twitter and quickly understood from that context that the booktalk would be quick and informative.

> Based on my research, the preferred order of the BEMT techniques is as follows:
> 1) *Book Tweets*
> 2) *Snap'n Read*
> 3) *Wrap Back and Open End*
> 4) *Graphic Form*
> 5) *Power-Full Points*

Given the research discussed, it is clear why *Book Tweets* are the preferred booktalk method. Additionally, teens love to be read to; they really do. They enjoy it especially when the read-aloud is short and concise with a book excerpt that is intriguingly informative, dramatic, or suspenseful. I believe this is why *Snap'n Read* is a highly favored BEMT technique. My student librarians have experienced the *Snap'n Read* as a teen favorite as well, and in response to this preference, they made the mistake of creating repertoires that involved a lot of *Snap'n Reads* that were often too long with perhaps use of one other technique, such as the *Book Tweet*. (I must caution that I believe that the reason teens like *Snap'n Read* is because it is used *the least* within a good booktalk repertoire, thus it stands out.)

It has been my observation and experience that with booktalking, teens do not like spoilers. This is why the *Wrap Back* and *Open End* techniques are popular, as these techniques raise interest (*Wrap Back*), intrigue (*Open End*), and relatability (both), without giving away too much of the plot or conclusion.[xl] Meanwhile, *Book Tweets* and *Graphic Form* are the booktalks that get teen readers the most actively engaged in your presentation. As you present your booktalks, you should pass books around to audience members so that they can have a kinesthetic experience

with the book as well. And lastly, while the *Power-Full Points* technique is the least favorite among small groups of teens (merely because it reminds them of school!), it is highly effective for booktalks in a large group setting for high school and college-aged audiences.

Conclusion

The BEMT techniques are effective tools that are fun to create, practice, and perform for teen readers and audiences. Today's combined adolescent developmental factors of (1) impatience for delayed gratification, (2) multitasking literacy skills, and (3) nonstop technological connection call for concise, impactful booktalks with today's teen readers. The value of this work is to document and convey the importance for booktalking to become compatible with current teen literacy practices that are invariably fast-paced, concise, and multimodal.

The BEMT techniques are brief reading adverts that can be performed to appeal to the ways that teens see, hear, and interact in the world. While adolescent developmental and LIS research concepts, along with preliminary feedback from informal teen focus groups, provide a foundation upon which the BEMTs have been created and refined, ethnographic research is needed to substantiate the effectiveness of the techniques across sociocultural contexts. As YA librarians enjoy the contribution of the BEMTs to creating short, quick, punchy, and tech-friendly booktalks, they will experience teen readers with a genuinely sustained interest in librarians, library materials, and, most of all, reading.

Notes

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[iii] Ibid.

[iv] Hill, "The World of Multitasking Teens"; Kristen Purcell et al., "How Teens Do Research in the Digital World," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, November 1, 2012, http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/01/how-teens-do-research-in-the-digital-world/ (accessed June 11, 2015).

[v] Nancy Foasberg, "Student Reading Practices in Print and Electronic Media," *College & Research Libraries* 75, no. 5 (September 2014): 705–23, doi:10.5860/crl.75.5.705; Donald J. Leu et al., "What Is New about the New Literacies of Online Reading Comprehension?" in

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[viii] Purcell et al., "How Teens Do Research in the Digital World."

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[xii] David W. Moore, Thomas W. Bean, Deanna Birdyshaw, and James A. Rycik, "Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 43, no. 1 (1999): 97–112; cited in International Reading Association, *Adolescent Literacy Report*, revised 2012.

[xiii] International Reading Association, *Adolescent Literacy Report*.

[xiv] Deborah Brandt, "Accumulating Literacy: Writing and Learning to Write in the Twentieth Century," *College English* 57, no. 6 (1995): 649–68, http://dx.doi.org /10.2307/378570, inDaniel Keller, *Chasing Literacy: Reading and Writing in an Age of Acceleration* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014).

[xv] Keller, *Chasing Literacy*.

xvi Ibid.

xvii Hill, "The World of Multitasking Teens," 34.

xviii Koss, "Use YA Literature to Harness Adolescents' Digital Media Skills"; Prezi is a web-based presentation software platform (https://prezi.com/) popular with many educators.

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xx Daniel Romer, "Adolescent Risk Taking, Impulsivity, and Brain Development: Implications for Prevention," *Developmental Psychobiology* 52, no. 3 (2010): 263–76.

xxi Ibid.

xxii Ibid., 274.

xxiii Purcell et al., "How Teens Do Research in the Digital World," 2 of 8.

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xxxv Stenström, *Teenage Talk*; Stenström, Andersen, and Hasund, *Trends in Teenage Talk*.

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xxxviii Tara, "Book Cover Images and Copyright," *The Librarian Who Doesn't Say Shhh!*, May 26, 2014, http://librarianwhodoesntsayshhh.com/2014/05/26/book-cover-images-copyright/ (accessed June 16, 2015).

xxxix Sara Hawkins, "Copyright Fair Use and How It Works for Online Images," *Social Media Examiner*, November 23, 2011, http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/copyright-fair-use-and-how-it-works-for-online-images/ (accessed June 16, 2015).

xl Case in point, I recently performed an *Open End* for a teen reader, and when I finished, her eyes were wide open and she said, "So what happened?!?" I answered with a smile, "You have to read the book!" This exchange is evidence of how the BEMT techniques can draw teen readers into the story and get them involved with meaningful literary discourse and critical thinking, which is important for healthy cognitive development and social interaction for teens.

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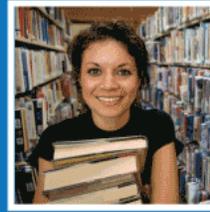
YouthStudio: Designing Public Library YA Spaces with Teens

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Abstract

This paper describes how research was used to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of a public library young adult (YA) space design program with teens and librarians through a community–university partnership. Previous studies have shown why it's necessary for librarians to allow teens to participate in public library YA space design projects. This paper seeks to fill a gap in the literature by contributing a theoretical and methodological framework to study YA space design projects *with* teens and librarians using critical pedagogy and ethnographic action research. Community informatics is the theory and practice of using information and communication technology in support of community-defined development goals, which might include digital inclusion, civic engagement, and social justice. The Youth Community Informatics Studio, or YouthStudio, is introduced as a model of engaged scholarship that embraces both critical pedagogy and ethnographic action research to show how researchers can work with teens and librarians to design, implement, and evaluate YA space design projects in public libraries, as sites where teens can engage in social change.

Introduction

The education literature is rich with examples that show how research rooted in critical theoretical perspectives and participatory design techniques can support teens in gaining social and technical skills while building other capacities in informal spaces outside of school. The connected learning field is an exciting and growing area of scholarship that embraces teen-driven

interests and "centers on an equity agenda of deploying new media to reach and enable youth who otherwise lack access to opportunity."[i] However, few studies within library and information science (LIS) have embraced critical scholarship *with* teens and librarians, particularly in the design of YA library spaces. While social justice in LIS is another emerging area of scholarship, there is still a lack of research-based examples that instructors and their students can use with teens and librarians to address broader social issues and concerns through library design projects. This paper seeks to fill this gap in the literature by describing how research was used to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of a public library young adult (YA) space design program with teens and public librarians through a community–university partnership. By reviewing the existing literature on public library YA space design, community informatics, and critical pedagogy in YA library services, we seek to make a contribution to the growing field of social justice studies in LIS by providing a model of engaged scholarship that embraces critical theory and action research to address the issues that matter most to teens in their everyday lives, such as equitable access to education and having voices that matter in society.

Literature Review

The following section considers studies that have sought to advance the idea of using critical theoretical and participatory approaches to researching YA library space design. We focus not only on strategies that address the needs of teens within libraries, but also on how these needs are connected to broader social justice concerns that impact teens outside library walls.

Designing Public Library YA Spaces

Research on the design of public library YA spaces is a fairly new area of study within library and information science. Research with teens is an even more contemporary focus.[ii] Historically, teens have been a marginalized population in U.S. public libraries, alongside other historically oppressed populations such as women, nonwhite citizens, and non-English speakers. Urban teens in particular have experienced an even greater challenge in overcoming the racial and socioeconomic stereotypes that have prevented librarians and the public at large from seeing teens as an essential part of our society, not to mention the future of this country.[iii] In this context, teens' perspectives did not matter in the design of public library spaces. Rather, library design has been "driven by the personal likes and ideas of librarians, administrators, and architects."[iv] As Bernier describes, "Although young adults are widely recognized as constituting nearly 25 percent of all library users in the United States, the vast majority of libraries devote more space and design attention to bathrooms than to young people's spatial needs."[v] Bernier explains that the first in-depth study of public library YA space design didn't appear until 2006, with the research of Cranz and Cha.[vi] These researchers gathered observational data about teens' behavior and interviewed library users in the teen space. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, the authors found that body-conscious design in library YA spaces offered the potential for teens to embrace "healthy postures"[vii] to promote comfort during reading and use. While the study is useful for beginning to understand the needs of teens in the design of YA library spaces, it did not include teens themselves in the beginning of the public library YA space design project.

More recently, researchers have studied the role of user-centered design in the development of public library YA spaces. For example, in their study of teens' and librarians' preferences and recommendations for effective design of YA spaces, Kulhmann, Agosto, Bell, and Bernier found that teens and librarians both recommended that public library YA spaces focus on physical comfort, leisure activity and information needs, and academic activity and information needs.[viii] These and other findings support the recommendations in YALSA's National Teen Space Guidelines, which can play an important role in creating an environment that supports teens' "emotional, social, and intellectual development."[ix]

Librarians have also used participatory design and action research methods *with* teens as a strategy for developing public library spaces for teens. For example, Steele's report in *Young Adult Library Services*[x] is more aligned to recent recommendations,[xi] which have focused on involving teens in the design and creation of YA spaces. Steele, who was then the teen programming specialist/digital resource specialist at the Free Library of Philadelphia, began working with teens to address their feelings of alienation. She describes how the library YA space design project embraced dialogical design and action-research methods to develop a new teen space at the McPherson Square Library, which is "located in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Philadelphia."[xii] This paper was influential to us in developing our research approach, which used community informatics theories and ethnographic action research methods.

Community Informatics

The field of community informatics (CI) has been described as "the theory and practice of empowering communities with information and communication technology."[xiii] Its focus on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by individuals and groups in geographic communities is what sets CI apart from other areas of informatics research and practice. Building on Clement and Shade's conceptualization of the "access rainbow"[xiv] (as a response to critical questions such as "access for what?" and "access for whom?"), Gurstein introduced the concept of "effective use" as a strategy for moving beyond issues of access in addressing the digital divide and moving toward a set of indicators for measuring how "to successfully integrate ICTs into the accomplishment of self or collaboratively identified goals."[xv] However, critics have questioned the field's ability to truly empower communities simply through the use of ICTs alone and instead have productively argued that CI should play "a supporting role" in community development projects.[xvi] For the purpose of our research, we believe that CI is useful particularly to public library YA space design projects because it is "a more reflective practice that looks beyond short-term goals by taking into account broader societal concerns and contexts."[xvii] In other words, rather than simply focusing on furniture or lighting, we used a "problem-posing" educational strategy[xviii] that encouraged teens to see their teen space designs as a means for addressing the broader issues and challenges they experience in their everyday lives.

CI has also been considered as a research strategy with youth. For example, Bruce and Bishop developed a youth community informatics (YCI) model built on progressive education philosophy, and they asked critical questions to understand how community inquiry processes and the effective use of technology could be used for social justice, youth empowerment, and

building community capacity.[xix] Ritzo and Adams recognized that one of YCI's strengths as an approach to engaged scholarship is that it is "flexible" in developing community–university partnerships, while recognizing the "power differentials and deficits" that should be addressed by such partnerships.[xx] The research in our paper builds on Eubanks's approach to CI, which embraces critical pedagogy, participatory design, and action research methods. This approach inspires "insight by building on what emerges from everyday life experiences of participants in workshops or informal classes," "describes an orientation toward research that promotes concrete change by generating and assisting ordinary people's analysis and action," and places an emphasis on "active involvement of people who most directly confront problems."[xxi] Our research builds on these and other critical interpretive perspectives[xxii] to present a community informatics strategy that involves those who are closest to the problems and works with them in a participatory manner to support them in solving those problems.

Critical Pedagogy

The argument for incorporating critical theory, research, and practice *together* into library and information instruction is not new. For several years, LIS scholars and practitioners have drawn upon the work of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and other critical theorists to challenge the underlying assumptions guiding traditional information literacy practices as well as what constitutes legitimate research and knowledge.[xxiii] The purpose was to expose and challenge dominant narratives in mainstream society that structure and reinforce existing social, political, and economic inequalities in the United States. As Chu explains, "Literacy, as it applies to linguistic minorities, needs to be understood as a discourse of power and must be redefined in order for librarians to be able to provide them with appropriate literacy services."[xxiv] Chu recommends a list of library services and practices grounded in critical theoretical perspectives that can be used by librarians to better engage with and serve linguistic minorities in libraries. Into the 2000s, Chu and others in LIS invited educators to engage with critical pedagogy in order to see education itself as a "profoundly political activity."[xxv] These and other scholars broadened the field in LIS by asking critical questions about how knowledge construction happens and calling attention to which forms of knowledge are most valued in information literacy practices.

Critical pedagogy has also provided LIS scholars working in the areas of feminist studies, critical race theory, and poststructuralism with an epistemological venue for challenging the assumption that libraries are "neutral" spaces. Rather, critical scholars have argued that libraries are places where librarians, students, and community members can begin to develop what Freire called "conscientization," or critical consciousness.[xxvi] As Elmborg explains, "By developing critical consciousness, students learn to take control of their lives and their own learning to become active agents, asking and answering questions that matter to them and to the world around them."[xxvii] Kumasi introduced the idea of "cultural inquiry" in LIS as an approach to youth services librarianship that embraces critical pedagogy as a strategy for addressing the unequal ways in which knowledge is constructed and to provide learners with opportunities to engage multiple perspectives "on a variety of topics or themes (e.g., immigration), allowing participants to openly grapple with the complexities of race and the human experience."[xxviii] In another study, Austin drew upon the critical information literacy literature as a framework for her research on juvenile detention center libraries as sites for political action.[xxix]

These studies highlight the potential of critical pedagogy to address the power differentials inherent in the community–university partnerships mentioned previously. LIS scholars have argued for the need to move beyond "service learning" and toward learning *with* community members as a strategy for creating more equal educational opportunities for both community and university partners in community informatics projects.[xxx] Critical pedagogy emphasizes listening to and learning from teens and embracing "difference as a resource"[xxxi] to design more meaningful—and potentially even more impactful—YA spaces in public libraries.

Teen Space Architects

In this section, we describe the Teen Space Architects program in which we used our Youth Community Informatics Studio, or YouthStudio, participatory research and design approach with teens and librarians at the Moore Public Library in Oklahoma. The project planning began in the fall of 2014 through a partnership between the Moore Public Library, which belongs to the Pioneer Library System, and the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) at the University of Oklahoma as part of the graduate-level class titled "Leadership in Information Organizations." The branch manager at the Moore Public Library invited the lead author of this paper to assist in developing programming to engage the increasing number of teens at the library. The longtime teen services supervisor had recently left, and the teen services department was undergoing a reorganization. The library administration hoped that more of the library staff would be able to provide services to teens to address the significant community need for teen services. The class was developed as a response to this need and as a way to provide the graduate students, two of whom were also Public Services Assistants at the library (the second and third authors of this paper), with more experience developing community engagement programs with teens in Moore, which was experiencing increasing socioeconomic challenges. The free and reduced-price meal eligibility data for the schools surrounding the library are provided in table 1.

Table 1. Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility Data for Moore, Oklahoma (2012)

School	Free	% Free	Reduced	% Reduced	Free & Red.	Enrollment	% Low Income
Central*	306	55.04%	76	13.67%	382	556	68.71%
Southgate-Rippetoe*	434	62.63%	95	13.71%	529	693	76.33%
Plaza Towers*	282	56.97%	60	12.12%	342	495	69.09%
Highland East**	236	33.33%	73	10.31%	309	708	43.64%
Moore***	686	31.37%	179	8.18%	865	2,187	39.55%

Key: *elementary school, **junior high school, ***high school

Source: Oklahoma State Department of Education, "Oklahoma 2011-2012 Low-Income Report,"

http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/LowIncomeReport1112.pdf.

Program Goals

The idea to invite teens to help redesign the teen space at the Moore Public Library developed both in response to the branch manager's interests in teen programming and through a brainstorming session with the instructor and graduate students during class, which was held off-campus every week in a conference room at the Moore Public Library. Coincidentally, the branch manager and information services department staff had been discussing this idea before the class started; therefore, the idea quickly took off at the library, and the teen program planning quickly got under way. The first step was to develop the project goals and a flyer (fig. 1) to recruit teens for the program.

Figure 1

The goal of the Teen Space Architects program was developed in collaboration with our community partner and was later elaborated upon in class between the instructor and students. The goal was finally articulated in the following way: "To engage teens through community involvement in an interactive and fun environment while fostering digital literacy and leadership

skills." It is important to note that while the goal of the project was determined by the library and was further refined by the instructor and students, the teens still had additional opportunities to articulate why this goal mattered to them. In other words, the goals were broad enough to provide a focus for the teen program while still enabling teens to participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project. This paper focuses on how research was used to guide and study this participatory process.

Program Implementation

The outreach and recruitment materials enabled us to attract a total of nine teens (four girls and five boys), ages twelve through seventeen, to the program. One boy, age eleven, also participated in the program. Table 2 includes a sample of the participant demographics that were available to us; we did not collect demographic information on participants' races/ethnicities. Because the only incentive for teens to attend our once-a-week evening program was free pizza, we found it difficult to keep our attendance up over the entire eight-session program. The project culminated in a final presentation by four of the teens to the city manager of Moore, the director of the Pioneer Library System, the director of the School of Library and Information Studies at OU, parents of the teens in the program, librarians in Moore, and other friends and family. All four teens came back the week following to participate in the focus group session, which was part of our final teen program evaluation.

Table 2. Teen Participant Demographic and Program Attendance Information

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Number of Sessions Attended
Adam	11	M	8
Allison	14	F	7
Ben	12	M	1
Brandy	12	F	1
Fred	13	M	1
Heather	14	F	1
James	16	M	6
Laura	17	F	3
Ron	12	M	2
Sam	17	M	8

The YouthStudio was introduced to the graduate students at the beginning of the semester as a theoretical, methodological, and practical model for engaging with the participants in the Teen Space Architects program. The YouthStudio is grounded in the theoretical frameworks mentioned above, as well as the lead authors' past experiences using studio-based learning in community engagement projects.[xxxii] In class, graduate students learned about the community engagement theories and popular education underpinnings of the YouthStudio approach that formed the basis for our engagement with the teens. Popular education, as a form of critical pedagogy, refers to the process whereby people come together to reflect on their everyday experiences, which allows them to learn about "the larger social, political, and economic contexts in which they live."[xxxiii] The engagement between educators and students as "co-

speakers, co-learners, and co-actors" [xxxiv] was essential to our research and practice with the teens and librarians at the Moore Public Library. Figure 2 shows the timeline of activities with the teens throughout the semester, which culminated in the teens' final presentation of their virtual designs.
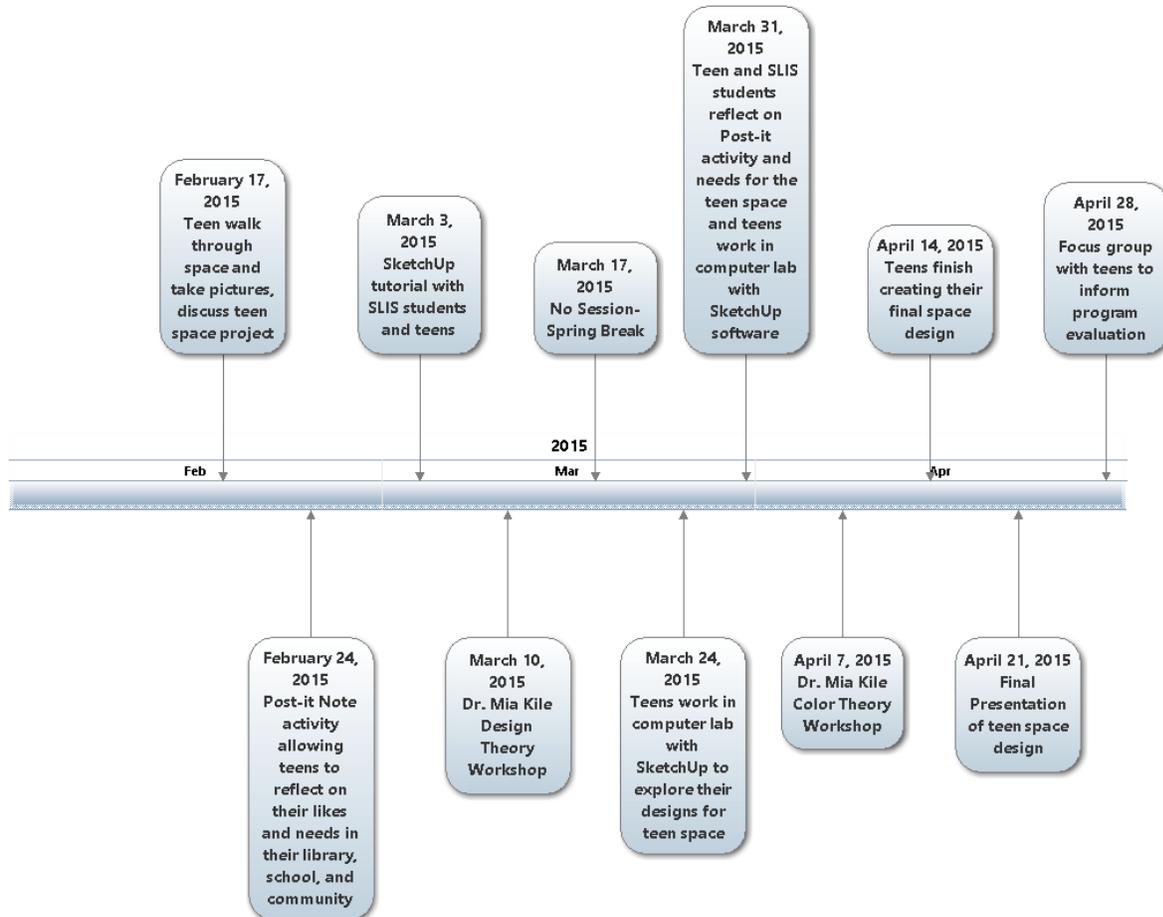
Figure 2

Research Design

The research was designed to involve the instructor and graduate students as co-investigators while working with the teens as partners and co-creators of knowledge. The following research question was initially developed based on our community partner's main interests: *How can a public library use studio-based learning to promote youth digital literacy and leadership skills?* As we began our work with the teens at the Moore Public Library, we realized that our research question changed to focus more on how critical pedagogy and ethnographic action research could be used to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of a public library YA design program with teens and public librarians through our community–university partnership.

Research Methods and Data Collected

To answer this question, the researchers sought to engage both teens and librarians in the overall design, implementation, and evaluation of the YouthStudio program, which focused on helping teens to develop digital literacy and leadership skills through the library YA space design activities. We also used popular education approaches (see the "Library, School, Community" workshop below) to encourage teens to think about how the library design project could be used to address their broader social and community concerns. In this way, the methodology perhaps most reflects what has been described as "ethnographic action research" (EAR),[xxxv] which was originally developed as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of community-based media initiatives that sought to engage "marginalized or excluded communities."[xxxvi] Tacchi and colleagues argue that researchers interested in using information and communication technology for community development need an approach "designed not simply to research a project, but to gain a level of understanding of the local context and[,] thus, to assist in project design, ongoing evaluation and monitoring[,] and in a continual cycle of research and project development."[xxxvii] We embraced ethnography because of its focus on "working to understand how media and technology are meaningful to people in the context of their everyday lives."[xxxviii] EAR was developed "to focus on actual practices of use and interaction with technologies in the wider context of people's lives and social and cultural structures."[xxxix] This approach situates the researcher within the local context to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the local culture and the broader society.

Action research, the second half of the EAR approach, was useful to us because it is a research process that is "tightly connected to the activities of a project" in the following ways:

1. *Active participation:* The people who should benefit from the research participate in defining the aims and direction of the project and in interpreting and drawing conclusions from it.
2. *Action-based methods:* The activities and experiences of participants generate knowledge alongside, or in combination with, more formal methods.
3. *Generating action:* Research is directly aimed at generating short-, medium-, and long-term plans, including business plans, ideas for new initiatives, solving problems, targeting sectors of the user constituency, and finding new resources of partners.[xl]

EAR also complemented our community informatics studio model, which is an approach to engaged scholarship that considers research, teaching, and practice together as part of an iterative learning approach used in community–university partnerships.[xli] EAR allowed us to use ethnography "to guide the research process and action research to link the findings back into a project's ongoing development."[xlii] Table 3 provides on overview of the researchers, the methods, and the data collected as part of the community–university research model used in our study.

Table 3. YouthStudio Ethnographic Action Research Methodology

Researcher	Method	Data Collected
Instructor, SLIS students,	Action research	Teen feedback: informed next steps of the

and teens		project, including design activities for teens and librarians.
Instructor and SLIS students	Ethnography: observation	Field notes: inscriptions of the actions and words of teens during the YouthStudio program meetings.
SLIS students	Ethnography: observation	Journal entries: reflections on (1) the theories that informed our practice and (2) the observations of the design activities.
Instructor	Ethnography: interviews	Feedback from teens and branch manager: informed overall design, implementation, and evaluation of program.
Instructor	Ethnography: focus groups	Feedback from teens and SLIS students: provided summative evaluation material that was considered alongside other ethnographic data.
Instructor and SLIS students	Ethnography: documents	Information about the library system's goals and objectives, which allowed researchers to consider data and align action research activities with community partner's priorities.

Data Analysis

As we conducted our fieldwork, the graduate students in the class wrote weekly journal entries, which included reflections on the activities in the Teen Space Architects program. They shared these entries, which served as part of the data for our analysis, with the instructor through the online course management system. We then used these entries to elaborate on the issues that we discovered in our field notes, which informed future activities with the teens in the program. This process of reflecting, planning, doing, and observing played a significant role in our ethnographic action research approach, in which we considered multiple perspectives throughout the data-collection process. Therefore, our analytical process followed the approach described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, in which "analysis is less a matter of something emerging from the data, or simply finding what is there; it is more fundamentally a process of creating what is there by constantly thinking about the import of previously recorded events and meanings."[xliii] We often shared the themes that emerged from our field notes and journal entries with the teens to ensure that our YA library space design activities were both accurately recorded and aligned with the goals of the Teen Space Architects program. We used this triangulation approach[xliv] to establish patterns in the data and to help validate our findings. During our final focus group, we shared our findings from the semester with the teens to get their feedback and additional insights on the themes, to which we will now turn.

Findings

Through our ethnographic action research approach, several themes emerged from our analyses and discussions in class and with the teens of the weekly field notes and journal entries. The following three themes were most frequently mentioned by teens during the redesign process:

1. Comfortable hangout space
2. Space for informal learning
3. Community information exchange

In this section, we outline our findings. We also show how our research yielded important insights, which allowed us to share and ultimately co-create knowledge with teens and librarians in Moore. Through our emphasis on critical pedagogy, we describe how these three themes related to broader concerns among the teens about the library, school, and their community, which were highlighted in their final library YA space design. We conclude by elaborating on the extent to which the YouthStudio achieved the program goals, which were focused on fostering teen digital literacy and leadership skills.

Comfortable Hangout Space

One of the consistent themes throughout the Teen Space Architects project was the emphasis on creating a space that was comfortable and inviting for teens. Comfortable furniture was one of the first issues to emerge during our initial meeting, in which we asked teens to use iPads to take pictures of things they liked about the existing space as well as things they'd like to see changed through the redesign. We then led a discussion to learn more about their likes and dislikes about the existing YA library space. All of the teens agreed that the chairs were not comfortable.

> *Laura:* Those chairs that have the wire stuff and then the like beanbag thing on it. It's really uncomfortable and a lot of people don't like sitting there. I think I know one person who likes sitting in there in those chairs. And then the other chairs, they're really comfy and whatnot, but then they've got those wood things that lots of people like to scratch stuff into it and would probably be a good idea to get some different chairs.

Other teens commented throughout the semester that more comfortable chairs and couches were needed in order to make teens feel more welcomed. The need for comfortable furniture in teen spaces is supported by previous studies and recommendations.[xlv] In addition to the furniture, teens also noted that having a space where teens can engage in hands-on activities played a critical role in allowing them to feel comfortable and welcome in a place where they would want to hang out and socialize.

Mia Kile, associate professor and academic director of the Division of Interior Design in the College of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma, led two workshops for the teens during the semester. In her first workshop, Dr. Kile introduced the teens to the field of interior design and exposed them to different design theories and various considerations in their teen space redesign. Dr. Kile also brought rolls of paper and design pencils to the workshop, which proved

to be a huge success with the teens. They immediately grabbed for the pencils, rolled out their paper on the table in the library conference room, and began sketching ideas based on what they were learning during the workshop. This particular hands-on activity during the third week of the program provided a transitional moment. We later learned from the teens during our focus group that hands-on design activities in the YouthStudio gave them an opportunity to address larger issues with the ways in which society views them, as illustrated the following exchange:

> *Sam:* Yeah. A while ago in my own experience, nobody listened to me. I was blamed for things in my public school experience that nobody should ever have to go through, and nobody listened to me, nobody cared what I said. Apparently at some point I called somebody a name and something very rude, and it apparently took a toll on her, but I don't remember doing that, and the principal did not care what I had to say at all. She was just, "You shouldn't have done that; it was very wrong." And just listening to people is very important, especially for those people that feel like they aren't listened to already, those people who are beaten down and discouraged and stuff. A lot of the times, it's from not being listened to and stuff, so definitely listen to people.

> *James:* I feel like that happens a lot with teens too. Teens get kind of grouped in with like a little-kid kind of status.

> *Allison:* They're not taken seriously.

> *James:* They're not taken as seriously as I think they should be possibly, I don't know. Maybe it's why I am teen that I say that. I don't know. But I feel like it's important to listen to them, like Sam was saying. Make sure they get their words out.

> *Allison:* Kids. Teens. Whatever, they like to use their hands. Drawing and even if it makes no sense and you can't read it, or whatever. It helps so much.

The hands-on design activities provided teens with an outlet where their voices could be heard and not silenced. Through this process, they engaged with deeper social justice issues impacting teens, such as negative stereotypes in the eyes of adults and the lack of educational opportunities for them at school.

Space for Informal Learning

During the second week of the YouthStudio, the first author led a popular education workshop, "Library, School, Community," to engage the teens in a conversation about the non-material aspects of the space. The purpose was to invite teens to think about how the Teen Space Architects project could be used to address broader social issues and concerns that mattered to them and other teens in Moore. Popular education was used as part of our ethnographic action research approach to gain feedback from the teens. We then used this information to inform future design activities. Figure 3 shows a picture of the workshop activity. Teens were asked to

write what they liked and disliked about the library, the school, and Moore on different colored Post-it notes. Then they were asked to put their notes next to the photos of the library, the school, and a picture that represented the Moore community.

Figure 3

Several important themes emerged from our popular education workshop. The teens' comments about the library still remained focused on the material aspects, including couches, tables, and chairs, and they also discussed information-based materials, such as books, computers, and an iPad for a teen catalog, as well as the iPad charging station. However, when we asked teens to comment on what they liked and disliked about school and Moore, several key non-material issues became visible. Perhaps most strikingly, the teens explained that they don't have enough time to learn in school—and they saw this as a huge problem. Their statements support Martin's assertions that "many challenges stand in the way of youth learning." Martin explains that school funding is often the cause,[xlvi] and libraries often fill that gap where learning in school falls short. These points are quite clear in the following exchange between the lead author and the five teens who participated in the workshop.

> *[First author]:* Cool, so let's move on to school. So school . . .

> *James:* There's a lot more to hate.

> *[First author, referencing earlier comments from teens]:* So . . . not enough time to hang out, feels rushed?

Laura: Yeah, it feels like you have little time to where the teachers can explain things and then it's like . . .

James: Here's your assignment, get out.

Laura: Yeah! And it's like wait a minute. I don't understand this, and then you have a few minutes to get to the other side of the building, 'cause I am [now] homeschooled, but I have been in many different elementary schools and junior high and the high school and a few private schools.

[First author]: [*Turning to James*] Have you had a different experience?

James: I haven't had a different experience necessarily. I do get the sense that it's kind of rushed and the fact the teachers don't have enough time to teach and that's definitely a problem. They have to get through everything, and I think that's where the problem of people not wanting to ask questions. . . . It's more like not wanting to waste other people's time. And I feel like with maybe a longer time period, and maybe that involves adding an hour to the day but extending each class by ten minutes would help out a lot.

[First author]: One question would be are there things you could build in the teen space that could fill the gap with things you aren't getting at school? So like if there was a way to create the time for other discussions and that could happen in the space?

Sam: Like tutoring?

James: Like by having a set time for people to come in and have a group study session and have a space for that. Like there's that one room right next to [the] secondary computer area . . .

Laura: The quiet room?

James: Yeah, the quiet room, and right next to that have an area where we can gather and get away from everybody else.

The teens later explained that a redesigned teen space at the Moore Public Library could address their problems with school by providing them and other teens with a more informal space where they could learn from each other through tutoring sessions. Through the popular education workshop, the teens had an opportunity think about their everyday experiences and begin to see the library redesign as a problem-posing educational strategy for addressing broader social and community issues, such as their negative experiences in school. As one of the teens, Laura, explained:

> One of the things I talked about last time was having like a little board that the library staff manages and stuff like that, but it has information as far as certain

groups that meet at the library. Or like if we do something like that, there can be study groups that say "Hey, we're studying this from this class at this time, come meet with us" type of a thing.

Here, we can see how the workshop allowed Laura to bring her interests from the initial meeting back into the conversation. She then used the discussion as a way to move beyond the material aspects of the library space and begin considering the Teen Space Architects program as an opportunity to address issues and problems in the community. Through this process, the teens began to see the community information board as a solution to some of the shortcomings of school, as well as the lack of physical spaces in Moore where teens could share information.

Community Information Exchange

During our initial meeting with the teens, they immediately talked about wanting a space in the library where they could share information with other teens. However, rather than developing a digital space online, they preferred the idea of a chalkboard. This idea, which was originally proposed during the first Teen Space Architects session, later became integral to the design process. In the following passage, teens discuss their interest in this idea with the instructor and graduate students during the first meeting of the program.

> *Laura:* One of our ideas for this is to put on the wall, um, . . . a little glass case . . . with a cork board in it that, you know, the, uh, library staff has control over so nobody is putting anything out there that shouldn't be up there, and it has stuff like, um, advertising for places that have, um, like lessons on how to play guitar, or drums, tutors. . . .

> *[Second author]:* A community board?

> *Laura*: Yeah! And if like a teenager band is looking for like a bass player that could be like, "Hey, e-mail us here if you know how to play bass. We need a bass player." Or something like that. And . . .

> *[Second author]:* Cool. And where are you wanting that? Do you want it in like the corner, or does it matter? You just want something like that?

> *Laura:* Somewhere in there . . . yeah.

> *[Second author]:* Cool.

> *Fred:* Like a bulletin board like where they can attach stuff up there.

> *Laura:* Yeah, yeah, yeah.

> *Adam:* And for like teen events, like at the library.

> *Laura:* Yeah, that would be a really good place to put that too.

In this passage we can see that the teens wanted a non-digital space where they could share information of interest to other teens. And Laura pointed out that the community information space could be used to share community events with teens as well as to facilitate informal learning outside the classroom.

From these and other conversations throughout the semester, we learned that there were very few places in Moore for teens to hang out. They didn't have a mall. The skate park was a problem because of an ongoing feud between skateboarders and BMX bikers, and the libraries in Oklahoma City and Norman, where there are more things for teens to do, were often too far away. This later led to another discussion about how the new teen space could be *the* place where information about community events for teens could be exchanged through the community information board. This idea was so important to the teens that the community information board became a centerpiece in their final design (see fig. 4).

Figure 4

Digital Literacy

The findings, so far, have focused on the things that mattered most to teens in redesigning the YA library space. We now consider how these findings contributed to the overall program goal, which was focused on helping teens develop digital literacy and leadership skills. In other words: "To what extent did the YouthStudio contribute to building the teens' digital literacy and leadership skills as an outcome of the YA library space redesign?"

Through our research and engagement with the teens during the eight-session program, we learned that most of the teens developed digital literacy skills by being exposed to new technology and having opportunities to learn by experimenting with software around other teens in an informal setting. This form of learning was perhaps most visible during the SketchUp

tutorial led by the second and third authors of this paper. During the session, the teens listened to the graduate students/librarians and followed their instructions. However, the teens learned the most through the hands-on activities. They used the library's laptops to try out SketchUp for the first time, exploring various design elements of the software through trial and error. This type of experimentation and play has been described as integral to the "messing around" process,[xlvii] which is considered to be a deeper level of teen engagement and learning with technology.

Ron and Sam had an interaction during the session that reflected Sam's growing ability to use the SketchUp software:

> *Sam:* You can never use the structure unless there is like gray areas there.
>
> *Ron:* How do you make it?
>
> *Sam:* Um, you tell it in circles. Take your draw tool there. Take it from that line over there.
>
> *[Second author]:* Ah, that's cute.
>
> *Sam:* And that end there . . . yes. Drag it to the other end.

We witnessed several moments during the session when Sam told the other teens in room what he was making. He was messing around, which allowed him to learn how to use the software. At one point, Adam explained to the other teens how to do something. James, another teen with less of an interest in and skill with technology, responded, "Dude, how did you find that?" This process of messing around led to a deeper level of engagement with the technology, and it also helped to promote leadership among the teens.

Leadership

There were several moments during the semester when the teens had the opportunity to develop leadership skills. Teen leadership was perhaps most visible in instances such as the one seen above, when they showed each other how to use the SketchUp software. Whenever our research team observed these activities, we invited teens to stand up in front of the room and teach the others how to carry out specific design tasks using the software. Toward the end of the session described above, Adam spent more time figuring out how to use the software than anyone else. He seemed quite content to jump up in front of the room to show the other teens what he had learned. Adam was often the quietest one in the group. We believe his actions reflected his growing ability to lead.

James was another teenager who showed leadership qualities during the program. However, unlike Adam, James was not confident with his technology skills. Rather, his leadership was visible in other important ways. For example, when another teen created something using SketchUp, James was often the first to compliment the teen. "No, that's perfect" and "That looks great" are two of the many comments he made in response to what other teens designed using the software. In this way, James reflected a "self-awareness" and "social skill" that have been

described as essential components of leadership.[xlviii] His thoughtfulness and positive encouragement to others, who were perhaps more skilled with the technology, reflected his ability to understand his own strengths and weaknesses and to use them to mentor other teens. In this way, he became an important leader, and he helped move the program to completion and success.

Discussion

We now turn to discuss the implications of our findings. We begin by describing what our findings support in the literature and then outline what we believe to be the contributions of our research to the existing literature on public library YA space design. We then discuss some of the challenges of the project, as well as the research limitations. We conclude with recommendations for how to improve the YouthStudio in the future as a way to use critical pedagogy and ethnographic action research to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of public library YA space design with teens.

Connecting Furniture and Study Spaces to Broader Social Issues

Our analyses support findings from previous studies that have shown how and why teens value physical comfort and spaces for informal learning in public libraries. As we have tried to show, our discussions and activities with the teens explored how to design comfortable spaces for teens to hang out, study, and access information. In their research on public library YA spaces, Agosto, Bell, Bernier, and Kuhlmann found that 86.4% of librarians and 70.0% of teens felt that "physical comfort was tied to physical furniture," and 36.3% of librarians and 40.0% of teens "identified their YA library spaces as desirable study spaces."[xlix] While our findings support this and other studies that engage teens in library space design activities, we also believe that our research makes a contribution to the literature through its investigation of how teens' participation in YA library space design activities can expose broader community and social concerns among teens, which they can have an opportunity to discuss and address through their engagement in a library design program.

The use of critical pedagogy in our "Library, School, Community" workshop allowed us, as ethnographic action researchers, to study teens' concerns about the following issues: the lack of teen spaces in Moore; the inadequacy of schools to support teen learning; and the scarcity of information by and for teens in the community. All of these issues drove the teens in our program to think more deeply about how material aspects of the library YA space redesign, such as furniture and lighting, could be approached in a new way to address the teens' broader concerns about their community and society. In this way, we believe our research exposed social justice issues—such as equitable access to information, education, and comfort—which motivated our teens' participation in the project. In this paper, we also sought to contribute new ways of thinking about critical pedagogy in public libraries as a growing area of theory, research, and practice in library and information science. We believe popular education provides a much-needed perspective, particularly to help address the inherent power differentials in community–university partnerships, as well as for connecting the dots between the local and structural contexts shaping teens' everyday lives. Popular education, as a form of critical pedagogy, provides an opportunity for scholars to work closely with teens to understand how their concerns

can impact the design, implementation, and evaluation of public library YA spaces. The use of critical pedagogy in such contexts can also lead to positive outcomes for teens, as we witnessed in this comment from Sam about the program during our final teen focus group: "It felt good to know what I'm saying is being heard."

Limitations and Recommendations

Along with the program's successes, we also realized that there were several limitations with both the research and the teen program in Moore. In terms of the program, both the community and university partners were disappointed with the low teen turnout for the program. During the lead author's interview with the library branch manager, the manager explained that she was pleased with the success of the program, but she expressed disappointment that more teens were not able to participate in such an exciting opportunity. Through the conversation, we determined that moving the time of the program from 6:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. would probably make it easier for more teens to participate. We also wished we had the opportunity to lead an exercise similar to the one described by Steele, in which the teens at the Free Library of Philadelphia engaged in action research in the community to acquire a greater depth of data to inform their designs.[l] Unfortunately, we didn't have the time and resources to support our teens in visiting other teens in the community and to get other teen input on the design, but we should have made the time. In the future, we would suggest that the YouthStudio model include a module to train teens in action research methods, which would allow them to gain more insights from other teens and librarians outside of the program.

In terms of the research, we were surprised to find that the teens valued a physical community information board, as opposed to a digital space to share information. This was also something that was perhaps more easily addressed than some of the other virtual platforms that might be more difficult for the library to develop and oversee. We also wished we had incorporated the "high/low/hope" exercise, which can be found in the Detroit Future Media Guide to Digital Literacy, into our program.[li] In this exercise, participants are asked to fill out Post-it notes to include their comments and feedback about the workshop session's high points, low points, and hopes for the next session. This activity would have provided researchers with additional data on what teens thought about the design activities as well as an ongoing evaluation tool for assessing the YouthStudio program.

Conclusion

In this paper, we described how research was used to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of a public library YA space design program. We presented findings from our study of the Teen Space Architects program at the Moore Public Library, which used community informatics theories, critical pedagogical approaches, and ethnographic action research methods together as a model of engaged scholarship with teens and librarians. Through our study, we learned that teens seek spaces in libraries that support comfort, informal learning, and the exchange of community information as the most essential aspects of public library YA spaces. While these findings support previous studies, which found that physical comfort and having spaces to study are important to teens in public library YA spaces, we explained how our study used critical pedagogy to look deeper at the broader issues in the community that influenced

teens' decisions about the need for physical comfort and for spaces where teens can hang out and study. We also elaborated on the ways in which our YouthStudio approach assisted teens in deepening their digital literacy and leadership skills in the process, which were two of the goals articulated by the library as our community partner. We concluded with a list of program challenges and limitations with the research that we experienced and then provided recommendations for future YouthStudio programs focused on designing public library YA spaces with teens and librarians through community–university partnerships.

Notes

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[xvii] Denison, Sarrica, and Stillman, "Introduction," 19.

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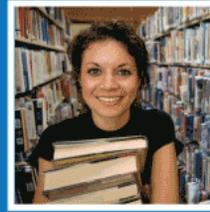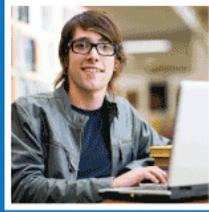
Examining Inclusive Programming in a Middle School Library:

A Case Study of Adolescents Who Are Differently- and Typically-Able

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Abstract

Numerous national and international studies have shown the importance of school libraries and librarians in students' educations, including literacy skill development and academic achievement. However, published research investigating school library accessibility and services from the perspectives of students who are differently-able are extremely limited, as are studies of inclusive library programming, or programming serving both typically-able and differently-able students. This case study examines inclusive library programming with adolescents in a middle school library. Findings indicate that the impact of inclusive school library programming was meaningful and often extended beyond the library's walls. Inclusive library programming resulted in skill development among the students who are differently-able and an appreciation for books and reading for all of the students. Lessons that began in the library, including those of acceptance and the realization that abilities are born through differences, helped define the school culture. The findings from this study are useful for guiding inclusive programming for other school library grade levels, as well as in public library settings.

Introduction

Libraries have long been championed as "the great equalizers of knowledge."[i] As such, one of their roles is to ensure equity of access to information. American society is perhaps more diverse than ever before. One in five people in the United States is differently-able. The number of children and young people (ages five to fifteen) who are differently-able is 2,614,919.[ii] Numerous others may not satisfy legal definitions for being differently-able but face challenges with, and need accommodations for, weak vision, hearing, cognition, learning differences, or mobility, among other challenges. As a result, there is a strong need to provide library programming for this population in order to ensure that library services are equitable for all

students and patrons. Further, the AASL *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* states, "Equitable access is a key component for education. All children deserve equitable access to books and reading, to information, and to information technology in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning."[iii]

This article describes a case study of one rural South Carolina school librarian's efforts to increase the level of inclusive programming offered in her school library. In this community of just over 66,000 residents countywide, 17 public schools serve approximately 8,950 students. Minority enrollment is 42 percent of the student body, and the student-teacher ratio is 16:1.[iv] Living in a community founded and once thriving on the basis of the textile industry and agriculture, families are now struggling. Over 20 percent of families are living in poverty.[v]

Terminology Selection

For the purposes of this paper, the authors have adopted the following definitions and terminology:

Along with person-first language (e.g., "person with a disability" replaces "disabled person"), "differently abled" is a synonym for "disabled" or "challenged" and is used to denote any of a number of perceived physical, mental, emotional, or cognitive challenges.[vi] Recognizing the many abilities and the autonomy of those people society may label as having a disability, the authors elected to modify the terminology to read "differently-able." This terminology is intended to convey that individuals are *able*, perhaps just differently in some ways than the people society chooses to label as not having a disability or as being typically-able.[vii]

Inclusive programming refers to programming in which both students who are differently- and typically-able take part. Inclusive programming utilizes instructional approaches that address the needs of students with a variety of backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities, as well as challenges. Such strategies contribute to an overall *inclusive* learning environment, or one in which students feel equally valued and to which they all contribute.[viii]

Adolescent literacy and adolescent literacy practices are defined following the definition of literacy outlined by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): "Literacy encompasses reading, writing and a variety of social and intellectual practices that call upon the voice as well as the eye and hand. It also extends to the new media—including non-digitalized multimedia, digitalized multimedia, hypertext or hypermedia."[ix]

Literature Review

"If libraries and media specialists serve children and young adults who are disabled without recognizing what they give us in return, we devalue them. We fail to see their abilities and their potential, and we fail to help them use their abilities and achieve their potential. When we see a child with a disability realistically, we discover a person who can enrich our lives and society at large."[x] The authors of the preceding quote, Walling and Stauffer, received national and international recognition for their seminal book *The Disabled Child in the Library*, published in 1983.[xi] As a groundbreaking publication in the area of library accessibility and equity of access, their book brought unprecedented awareness to the need for libraries to be inclusive. The authors' work was honored by then-president Reagan's Committee on the Employment of the

Handicapped. **Walling and Stauffer** continued to contribute to the body of literature in this area and published *Disabilities, Children, and Libraries*, an updated edition of their previous work, in 1993.[xii] Their work in the field was followed by Wesson and Keefe's *Serving Special Needs Students in the School Library Media Center*, published in 1995.[xiii]

More recently, advocacy for equity of access in libraries has been promoted through the guidelines and standards of national and international library associations. For example, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) published "Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth," which states that the "librarian will be able to identify and meet the needs of patrons with special needs."[xiv] In addition, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*, published by the American Association of School Librarians, calls for school libraries and school librarians to provide *all* students with opportunities to develop critical information literacy skills.[xv]

The standards and competencies from these and other associations play an essential role in establishing the mandate for equity of access. Unfortunately, barriers to equity of access persist in schools and libraries. Literature in the field, dating over three decades, has revealed numerous reasons for the disparity in library service for students who are differently-able. Some of the most frequently cited reasons include financial and other resource limitations (including perceived limitations), lack of awareness regarding the existence and impact of inaccessibility, and insufficient pre-service and continuing education. For example, Project ENABLE (Expanding Non-Discriminatory Access by Librarians Everywhere), which was established after a three-year research study at Syracuse University's Center for Digital Literacy (CDL), revealed that across all three phases of the study, school librarians rated their services to students with disabilities lowest on all surveys. No librarian reported providing separate instruction to students with individualized education programs (IEPs).[xvi] Similarly, Allen found that the majority of library media specialists she surveyed felt inadequate in their knowledge regarding special education.[xvii]

In recent years, other studies have examined the ways in which school librarians can be better prepared to work with students who are differently-able. In her study regarding school library media specialists collaborating with special education (SPED) educators, Farmer concluded that librarians and SPED teachers need to collaborate regarding the best resources and services for students with special needs.[xviii] In addition, a study by Subramaniam, Oxley, and Kodama demonstrated the importance of pre-service and in-service training for school librarians working with students with disabilities in special education and non-special education schools.[xix] The authors recommend that library and information science programs include information about SPED services in their courses. The current study investigates inclusive library programming and offers librarians the opportunity to learn about the positive impacts of inclusive library programming and to develop strategies to help make it happen.

Methodology

Case study is defined as "an intensive, holistic, description and analysis of a single case, phenomenon, or social unit."[xx] For this case study, we examined an inclusive library program in a middle school library in rural South Carolina. A case study was the preferred methodology for this research because it allowed us to retain the meaningful and holistic characteristics of authentic situations in natural settings.[xxi] A non-experimental research design was used in order

to explore the relationship between inclusive library practices in a school library and their effect on students and the overall school community. We interviewed differently-able and typically-able students, the school librarian, the classroom teacher, a teaching assistant, and the principal to develop an understanding of characteristics that may enhance inclusive programming in libraries.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on social interpretations of critical theory. According to Merriam, critical qualitative research "uncovers, examines, and critiques the social, cultural, and psychological assumptions that structure and limit our ways of thinking and being in the world."[xxii] Cresswell and Merriam posit that the ultimate objective of this type of critique is to free ourselves from the constraints of assumptions about race, class, and gender and to become empowered to transcend those biases. This also has direct application to perceptions of ability.[xxiii] Since "the stigma of a disability will never diminish as long as the needs of children with disabilities are defined outside of the context of the needs of all children,"[xxiv] critical theory calls into question non-inclusive library programming. It offers opportunities for an understanding of inclusion, not as the need for programming with separatist or segregationist tendencies, but rather the direct application of best practices, including those defined in the AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:
1. What are the ways in which typically- and differently-able students respond to inclusive library programming?
2. What are the ways in which inclusive library programming affects the overall school culture?

Participants

Study participants included ten students who are differently-able and four who are typically-able, as well as the school librarian, the classroom teacher, teaching assistants, and the school principal. The students who are differently-able are in a special needs enrichment class at Jackson Middle School (pseudonym). All students are members of a group now officially named "The Friday Boyz and Star." The group's name was selected because the sessions are held on Fridays and initially all the students in the class were males; when a female student named Star joined, they became "The Friday Boyz and Star."

The students ranged in age from ten to fifteen years old. A brief description of each differently-able participant is provided below, followed by descriptions of the typically-able students who participated in the study. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper in all references to the school, student participants, as well as the adult members of the school community who took part in the study.

Differently-Able Participants

For the purpose of this paper, the disabilities defined in this section were taken from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) website.[xxv]

Miguel is eleven years old and in the sixth grade. He has Williams syndrome, a developmental disorder characterized by mild to moderate intellectual disability, unique personality

characteristics, and distinctive facial features, among other characteristics. People with Williams syndrome typically have difficulty with visual-spatial tasks such as drawing and assembling puzzles but excel at spoken language, music, and learning by repetition (rote memorization). These individuals also commonly have outgoing, engaging personalities, and extreme interest in other people.

Derick is ten years old and the youngest student in the group. Derick was first moved to Jackson Middle School because he had run out of the building at a previous school. He has Down syndrome and autism. Autism is said to be likely influenced by genetics and is one of a group of related developmental disorders, along with Asperger's syndrome and Rett syndrome, known as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). ASDs are labeled as a developmental brain disorder characterized by impaired social interactions, communication problems, and repetitive behaviors. Symptoms usually appear before the age of three. As stated in the *DSM-IV*, manifestations of the disorder vary greatly depending on the developmental level and chronological age of the individual. Down syndrome (also known as Down's syndrome) is an intellectual disability originating from a chromosomal anomaly. People with Down syndrome have a characteristic facial appearance and weak muscle tone (hypotonia).

Jorge is eleven years old and in the sixth grade. Jorge also has Down syndrome. He is bilingual, speaking English at school and Spanish at home with his family.

Robert is eleven years old and in the sixth grade. He has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Cerebral palsy is a term most often used to describe severe or complete loss of muscle strength due to motor system disease from the level of the cerebral cortex to the muscle fiber. This term may also occasionally refer to a loss of sensory function.

David is thirteen years old and has Angelman syndrome, a genetic disorder impacting the nervous system. Common characteristics include delayed development and intellectual and speech challenges, along with "coarse" facial features and light skin and hair pigments. Happy, excited spirits and laughter are also common.

Jarod is thirteen years old and has autism. Again, as stated in the *DSM-IV*, manifestations of the disorder vary greatly depending on the developmental level and chronological age of the individual.

Nathan is fifteen years old and has microcephaly and a spinal tumor. Microcephaly is defined as smallness of the head caused by incomplete development of the brain. This has implications for cognitive development.

Charles is twelve and has Down syndrome.

Star is fifteen and, at the time of the study, was the only girl in Ms. West's class. Star has cognitive challenges and some challenges with her speech

Darius is fourteen. Darius has microcephaly, which is defined as smallness of the head caused by incomplete development of the brain. This has implications for cognitive development.

Nathan, Darius, and Star all graduated at the end of the 2014–2015 academic year and are now in high school.

Typically-Able Participants

Yhoselin joined the "Friday Boyz and Star" by happenstance one day in the library. She visits Ms. West's class and has lunch with them regularly. She is now considering a career as a special education teacher or counselor.

Amy also joined the "Friday Boyz and Star" for their time in the library. She was a member of the Montessori science class that included Star and Darius on their science field trip at the end of the year.

Tori, another student who works with these students in their classroom as well as during their time in the library, says that "The Friday Boyz and Star" inspire her.

John is an eighth-grader who has been a part of this group for several years. He spearheaded the group of young men who went to the basketball coach and asked for Darius to be a member of the team. John received the leadership award at Jackson Middle School for the 2014–2015 academic year.

Participants from the Administration / Faculty / Staff

Ms. Salley is the school librarian. She has over twenty-six years of experience working in school libraries at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, in the public school system and in a home and school for children. Additionally, she has prior experience as a general and special education teacher and reading specialist. Ms. Salley holds a degree in Secondary Education with an emphasis in Spanish, and a Master's degree in Reading and Library and Information Science. She has been the Teacher Librarian at Jackson Middle School for the past eight years. She was named "Teacher of the Year" during her first year with Jackson Middle School and a second time for the 2014–2015 academic year.

Ms. West is the classroom teacher. The 2014–2015 academic year was her eighteenth year of teaching special education and her second year of teaching at Jackson Middle School. It was also her second year of teaching a population labeled as having severe/profound disabilities. In addition to her degree in Education, Ms. West also holds an EMD-Special Education certificate. While this terminology has now been updated, EMD is the acronym for "Educable Mentally Disabled."

Mr. Paul is one of three classroom assistants who worked primarily with Robert, serving as his shadow. As a pastor, Mr. Paul has spent many years working with children and teens.

Ms. Jenkins has been the school principal at Jackson Middle School for two years. She has always had a strong desire to work in schools and with students living in small communities. She has graduate degrees in Administration and Supervision and is currently pursuing a PhD in Educational Leadership.

Data Collection

The study took place from April through June 2015, during four visits to the school. The research sessions ranged from 1 to 1.5 hours each. They included one visit to the classroom, four 30- to 45-minute library sessions, and time spent conducting interviews.

Multiple data sources were used in this study. Qualitative data were collected from the following sources:

- Field notes and recordings obtained from observations during the classroom and library sessions
- Semi-structured interviews with the following:
  - Typically-able students
  - Classroom teacher
  - Classroom assistant
  - Librarian
  - Principal
- Photos taken during the sessions
- School district documents

Data were collected during each of the school visits. The first session began in the school library, where we met with Ms. Salley, the school librarian. She described her school library programming for various classes, including the special needs enrichment class that was examined for this study. These inclusive practices are described in greater detail in the "Findings" section.

Next, Ms. Salley took us to the students' classroom, where we met with Ms. West and observed her students in their classroom environment. The three staff assistants worked with the students while we interviewed Ms. West. As part of the interview, she provided the researchers with a profile of each student's academic, social, and physical abilities and challenges. After gathering this information and observing the students, we joined the students, Ms. West, and the assistants in the library for their weekly library visit. The other three sessions took place entirely in the library.

In order to allow for different perspectives, each researcher took extensive field notes and recorded the sessions while we observed the students in their classroom and during the library sessions. In addition, a photographer from the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina accompanied us on one of the visits to take pictures of the students as they participated in the library programming. We also observed how typically-able students responded to their differently-able peers, when they joined in on some of the library activities. The observations and the photographs enabled us to examine the specific ways both sets of adolescents responded to inclusive library practices.

Due to the limited nature of the differently-able participants' verbal skills, we were unable to formally interview them for this study. We did, however, have informal conversations with them during our visits, and we were able to observe verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with other members of the school population to gain insight into their experiences with the members of the special needs enrichment class. During all of the sessions, probe-based interview questions were used to help maintain the focus of the discussion. This approach enabled us to elicit, as needed, the most complete answers to the questions. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews with Ms. Salley, the librarian; Ms. West, the classroom teacher; and Mr. Paul, an assistant in Ms. West's classroom. The final set of interviews was conducted with typically-able students and the principal of the school, Ms.

Jenkins. These students were identified by Ms. Salley and Ms. West, since they frequently took part in the inclusive library sessions, as well as other school events. These authentic conversations allowed us to further examine the participants' behaviors and the effect of inclusive library practices through the eyes of several members of the school community.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of both descriptive analysis and thematic development. To analyze data from all of the sessions, we independently read and reread the field notes and transcripts from the interviews. Next, we independently took notes and coded the data until patterns and themes emerged. After each researcher completed coding, we met to compare the themes and findings that developed from our individual analyses of the data. We discussed the themes and documented their frequency until we reached a consensus on what to include in our findings. This process led to the selection of five major themes, which are presented in the "Findings" section below.

Findings

In addition to interviews and observations, findings from this study are based on the inclusive practices observed during each library programming session, including scaffolding techniques—such as student questioning and discussion—context clues, and summarizing strategies. Other examples included reading aloud from picture books, showing the students storybook plush characters, and using visual aids such as videos, posters, and flags. Ms. Salley also incorporated the use of auditory skills when she had the students listen to and sing along with music. Finally, another inclusive practice that the researchers observed pertains to the classification system used in the library. Rather than labeling the picture books that she uses with the students as "E" or "Easy" books, typically used for younger readers, Ms. Salley uses "QR" for "Quick Read."

The five themes that emerged from the data analysis are as follows:

- The Door Is Always Open
- Individualize, Don't Generalize . . . Engage
- Accepting and Embracing Differences
- Skill Development
- Beyond the Library

The findings and comments from participants based on these themes are presented below, along with references to best practices that were observed throughout the study.

The Door Is Always Open

The theme of the library serving as an open and welcoming hub of the school was prevalent throughout the study. During our visits, the door to the Jackson Middle School Library was always open, both physically and metaphorically. Cheerful flags hang in the library, alongside school trophies, gnomes and other statues, a hornets' nest, and plants. The typical library program that we observed began with Ms. Salley using a picture book to tell a story, followed by an interactive literary activity, and ending with the students singing and dancing to their favorite

songs. Once the library class ended, the students selected books to take back to their classroom. Mr. Paul, an assistant in Ms. West's class, told us that the students liked selecting their own books. As he said, "They are excited to share their books and pass them around. They take the books back to the classroom and continue to enjoy them with one another throughout the week." In addition, Mr. Paul said the students look forward to coming to the library and find it to be a very rewarding experience. "They know that if they work on learning and reading, Ms. Salley will give them books they'll love and enjoy."

Ms. West and the classroom assistants reported that Ms. Salley worked with students to build relationships and a love for library time by honoring their individual needs. As Mr. Paul stated, "Even the students who were unable to speak were given a 'voice' through their physical actions." For example, when Derick participated in an animal matching game using the whiteboard, he was unable to say "owl." Ms. Salley pointed to the owl, and she asked the other students to say its name to help Derick. Then, when Derick could not physically move the stylus to make the match, she held his hand and helped him guide the stylus to the owl. Derick looked back at her smiling when she praised him for the correct answer.

Ms. Salley also made every effort to have typically-able students interact with Ms. West's students when they came for their library visits. If they were in the library at the same time, the typically-able students were invited to take part in the dancing that was held at the end of every library class for Ms. West's students. Ms. West commented that several of the typically-able kids felt so welcome that they began asking their teachers if they could come to the library to help the Friday Boyz and Star each week. She stated, "Ms. Salley makes it easy for people who don't know them to come in and not be intimidated by them." Finally, in another interview, she said, "Ms. Salley opened a door to change at our school."

Individualize, Don't Generalize . . . Engage

Another theme that emerged from the data was the focus placed on each individual student who visited the library. Rather than generalizing library activities into a one-size-fits-all program, Ms. Salley identified the specific needs and interests of individual students and engaged them, a process defined as "the joint function of motivational processes and cognitive strategies during reading."[xxvi] For example, after she read *Never Smile at a Monkey: And 17 Other Important Things to Remember*, each student was asked to point to their favorite animal in the book.[xxvii] In addition, near the end of each library session, the students were rewarded with dance time. They were allowed to pick their favorite songs. In one session when Ms. Salley asked, "What are we going to start with today?" Star yelled, "Justin Bieber," and all of the students started singing and dancing to "Baby."[xxviii] After that, several students requested Katy Perry's song "Firework."[xxix] Every effort was made to play a favorite song for the students, with all of them chiming in at the refrains while dancing. For example, Ms. Salley found out from Robert's mother that he likes Lady Gaga so she played "Edge of Glory"[xxx] for him each week.

Ms. Salley took the time to help engage each student with developmentally appropriate lessons, involving all of the students in the process. For example, after story time and the viewing of *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*,[xxxi] she helped Miguel use the whiteboard for a matching letters activity, an area of opportunity and skill development for him. She guided him with questions such as "A is apple. Do you see an apple?" and "Which letter matches 'ball'?"[xxxii] As she prompted his answers, she helped him move the stylus to the letters on top of the objects. The

other students encouraged Miguel and clapped when he was successful, actions that they had seen modeled by Ms. Salley, Ms. West, and the typically-able students.

Accepting and Embracing Differences

A third theme repeatedly appearing in the data was that the library was considered to be an inclusive space where individuals are taught to accept and embrace differences. Ms. Salley encouraged all of the members of the school community to get to know Ms. West's students and to recognize them for their abilities, not their disabilities. As Ms. West said about her students, "A lot of teachers and staff who don't normally see the kids have gotten to know them through the library—they stop in to see the dancing. They wouldn't know the kids if it weren't for the library program." The principal, Ms. Jenkins, echoed this sentiment, "Ms. Salley makes it easy for people who don't know [these students] to come in and not be intimidated by them." Similarly, Yhoselin, a typically-able student said, "I am not scared of anyone anymore after interacting with the group this year. I am not afraid of being with people you are not used to." In addition to joining Ms. West's class during visits to the library, she now also visits their classroom multiple times each week and goes to the lunchroom with them, where she also lends a helping hand carrying lunch trays.

Ms. Salley also created a safe space in the library where the students, faculty, and staff are recognized and honored for the differences among themselves. For example, knowing that Robert was limited to his wheelchair during dance time, his classmates would swing his arms and roll his wheelchair back and forth so that he could be a part of the dancing activities. They also carried books over to him and shared them when it was time to check them out. Ms. Salley and the assistants made sure to walk over to another student, Charles, and engage and include him. Charles would sit by the window during library time. Since he chose not to get up and dance with the group, they would sit next to him and rock back and forth with him to the music, an activity that always brought a smile to his face. As Nathan, a student with one of the highest intellectual abilities, said, "We are all different, but different in a good way."

Skill Development

Our analysis of the interviews revealed that the students developed a variety of skills as a result of their participation in the library programs. Some of these skills carried over into the classroom, and they appeared to be a result of best practices conducted by Ms. Salley. For example, when reading the picture books to the students, she used the reading strategy of "text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world" to help the students make personal connections to the readings and make meaning from the ideas in the text. Ms. Salley related a personal connection that occurred when she read a story about Martin Luther King, and she showed a picture of the civil rights leader at the Lincoln Memorial. When she asked the students where Dr. King was in the picture, Darius replied, "Washington, DC," since he had recently traveled there. She also employed other literacy practices to help scaffold the texts that she read to the students. For example, she defined and repeated new vocabulary, and she frequently pointed to the characters and repeated their names. In addition, we observed that she often paused in the story to ask questions about the text. This allowed her to check for the students' reading comprehension and helped to ensure that they were engaged as active listeners.

When speaking about her students, Ms. West reported that she noticed a "strengthening of their ability to focus during read-alouds, [and an] increase in listening comprehension." For example, Derick and Jarod were both typically non-verbal students; however, they learned the words to the songs they listened to in the library. The students' assistants also noted an improvement in these students' verbal skills since the library sessions began. Mr. Paul said that Derick and Jarod were both speaking more in class "as a result of library instruction and interacting with older students."

Furthermore, Ms. West described an additional change in one student's behavior regarding the handling of books. Prior to the class visits to the library, Ms. West had to keep the books in her classroom away from Derick because he would "tear them up." After hearing Ms. Salley read aloud to them, he started bringing *Pete the Cat* books[xxxiii] from the room for her to read to them in the library. Ms. West noted that "the skills in listening and thinking that Ms. Salley would always encourage in the students led to me being able to ask for more higher-level thinking in the classroom."

When describing some of Ms. Salley's inclusive practices, the assistant Mr. Paul said, "Ms. Salley's incorporation of fun activities helps break down barriers and shows them how fun reading can be." He also pointed out, "She does a lot of repetition, which helps them learn their skills." The principal, Ms. Jenkins, described the "skills that developed" and the fact that concepts were mastered when Ms. Salley and Ms. West replicated activities and read-alouds in the students' library and classroom settings. She also said, "One thing they get in the library is information on their level. Informational text is read to them, and Ms. Salley makes sure they understand it." She gave the example of a Black History month lesson and said that Ms. Salley made sure that the students knew Dr. Martin Luther King's name.

It was further noted that some of the students learned how to match shapes and colors through the Promethean board activities that the students participated in during library time. These activities helped to strengthen skills related to the students' eye and hand coordination, one of the practices listed in the NCTE's definition of adolescent literacy. The successful use of the Promethean board in the library reinforced the need for one in the classroom and, subsequently, one was purchased for Ms. West's room.

Beyond the Library

The final theme that evolved from the data was that the impact of inclusive school library programming extended beyond the library walls at Jackson Middle School. The friendships that developed in the library between the typically-able and differently-able students carried over into classrooms as well as other school and community venues. The pervasive impact of these inclusive practices is characterized by Ms. Jenkins in the following statement, "There is lots of love for these children schoolwide—everyone knows them." Mr. Paul added, "They walk around the school and the other students know them by name and high-five them." Ms. West felt that these inclusive relationships were influenced by Ms. Salley. After witnessing how much her students enjoyed their visits to the library, and how much they learned from the library programming, she saw the value of getting her students beyond the four walls of their classroom. She said that Ms. Salley "helped push me into getting the children into other parts of the school culture."

One example of how inclusive the entire school environment became occurred when Darius was invited to be on the school's basketball team, after his typically-able friend John suggested that the coach invite Darius to be on the team. John proudly described how he would pass the ball to Darius in the games. He said that he only expected Darius to play "a time or two," but he ended up playing in all but two games. As several of the students and faculty members reported, Darius shot the winning goal in a particularly close game, and the fans from both teams "went wild." Darius was also selected as the "Most Valuable Athlete" in the school yearbook, a title that was previously awarded only to typically-able students. Another example of schoolwide inclusiveness is that one of the classes of typically-able students invited Darius, Nathan, and Star to go on a science field trip with them near the end of the school year, and Darius was invited to escort one of his friends who is typically-able to the prom.

From the standpoint of the principal and faculty who were interviewed, these examples of inclusiveness appeared to be unique to Jackson Middle School. For example, Ms. Jenkins commented that she had not observed these types of inclusive activities in the library and other settings in schools where she had previously worked. Rather, her experience was that differently-able students' activities outside of their classroom were "just in the gym." Ms. West observed that other librarians she had worked with in the past "didn't do inclusive activities."

The inclusive school library program at Jackson Middle School also provides students with an incentive to use libraries when they become adults. As Ms. West pointed out, the inclusiveness of the Jackson Middle School Library has helped her students know that the library is a "positive place to go, and it will carry over when they are adults and in the community. They will know to use the public library when they are adults. It will always stick with them that librarians can help them."

Finally, the typically-able students were also impacted by their experiences with inclusive library programming. The interactions with these students opened their minds to the reality that "a person is so much more than the name of a diagnosis on a chart."[xxxiv] As Amy said, "Interacting with the students makes me happy. When you do stuff with them and they say, 'Yay!,' it makes you feel good." John talked about how "inspiring" it was to be around the students in Ms. West's class. Tori, another typically-able student, said that she was "no longer afraid to be around people who are not just like me."

Discussion

It was apparent from this study's findings that the participants developed a variety of literacy skills as a result of the school's library programming. The students in Ms. West's class were excited to take books with them after they left the library. This love for reading carried over into their classroom setting, as they shared their library books with their classmates. In addition, both the differently-able and typically-able students demonstrated positive responses to their interactions with each other in their inclusive library setting. The spirit of inclusion that began in the school library now defines the school culture and has had an impact on the entire school community.

The following is a select list of recommendations for librarians who are interested in achieving a similar culture of inclusiveness in their library settings. Although the recommendations refer to

students in K–12 schools, these activities can easily be incorporated in to programming activities for differently-able patrons in public libraries.

1. Visit the special education teachers in your school, as well as other teachers who have differently-able students in their classrooms. Encourage them to bring their students to the library. Take your calendar with you and set a date for the first visit while you are there.
2. Purchase additional resources that meet the needs of differently-able students. For example, if you are in a middle school or high school, add picture books and visual materials to your collection, if you do not already have some. If you do not have a smart board in your library, ask your principal for additional funding to purchase one, so that you will be able to allow for differentiated instruction for all of your students. Tools and resources can be selected with universal access in mind. Some resources may initially be purchased with the idea of meeting the needs of students who are differently-able, but many of these tools and resources will also support the learning needs of typically-able students with varying learning styles.
3. When selecting materials to use with these students, be sure to include books that have simple language and sentence structure, and that are high-interest texts.
4. When reading a story aloud, emphasize certain words and sounds that are important to the story line. Use repetition to highlight parts of the narrative.
5. Find ways to relate the books to the students' lives and the world around them. For example, "This is a story about a monkey. Have any of you ever been to the zoo and seen a monkey?"
6. Stop frequently and ask questions of the students to be sure that they are engaged in the story. For example, "What is your favorite animal in this story?"
7. Consider including multimedia resources in programs to heighten interest, such as showing short videos, YouTube programs, playing music, et cetera.

Finally, it is important that pre-service school and public librarians are provided with the skills they need to work with the differently-able students and patrons they will be serving in their future careers. Educators in schools of Library and Information Science should provide future librarians with recommended resources and programming ideas in their classes to help them feel prepared to work with students of all backgrounds and abilities.

Limitations

The structure of the case study, which was comprised of observations and semi-structured interviews, was both a limitation and a strength of the work. Findings are limited to a select group, during a limited period of time. As is true of most qualitative work, it lies with the reader to determine which findings of this study are transferable to other contexts. This same design, however, allowed the participants' voices and lived experiences to guide the work for the study. Being immersed in the school and its inclusive library programming facilitated in-depth data collection and critical analysis.

Conclusions

The current study is one of an exceptionally limited number to investigate equity of access to information for marginalized populations and inclusive library programming in schools or other

library settings. One identified barrier to inclusive library programming has been apprehension and perhaps even fear. Teachers and librarians, as well as other members of school communities, have reported feelings of inadequacy and even fear when it comes to inclusion. Some educators have commented that they just don't know where to begin. Thus, this study helps to fill an existing, critical need. What better way to learn about inclusion than from a librarian, students, and a school that "lives" inclusion every day and can offer best practices? "How can phenomena and realities be studied accurately if they are not studied from the perspectives of the individuals for whom they have a direct impact?"[xxxv] It seems that this sort of view is the hallmark of evidence-based practice.[xxxvi]

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) highlights the need for all students with disabilities to have access to programs, resources, facilities, and services of the school.[xxxvii] It underscores that all children bring gifts and strengths to our libraries and schools, and that access to library resources and services should be provided to every student, regardless of his or her physical and intellectual abilities. This study provided examples of firsthand best practices for how to create a culture of inclusion in library settings. Striving for inclusion means seeing students or patrons for who they are and for their abilities. It means refusing to allow labels to precede—and in some cases, define—people. It means caring. It means making a difference.

Dedication

This article is dedicated in loving memory of Micheal Walker.

Appendix
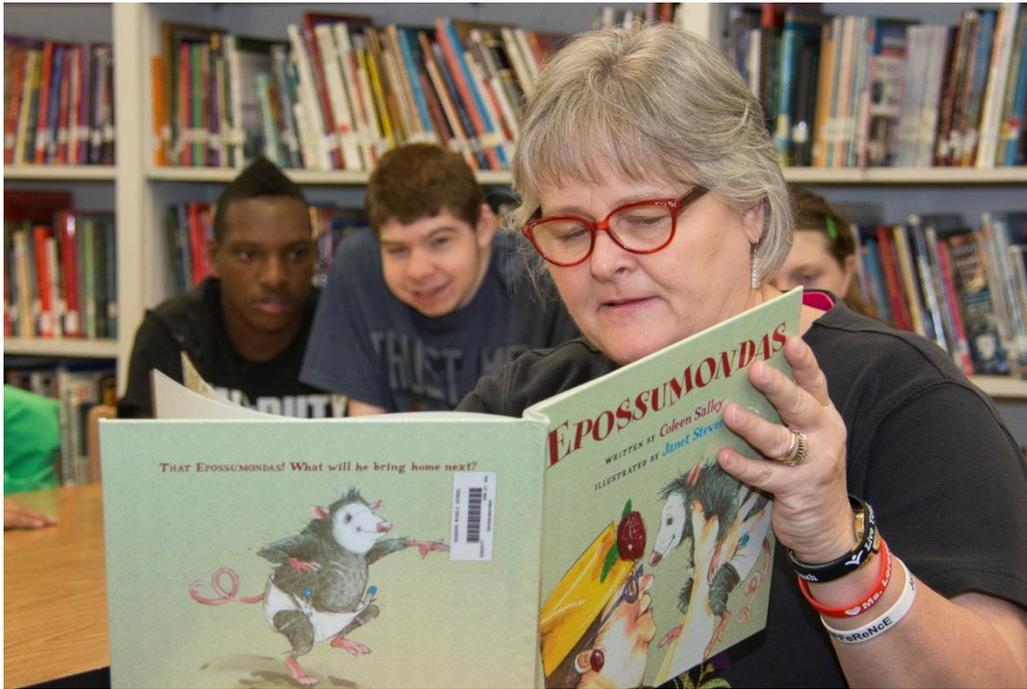
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