

TEEN SERVICE PROPOSAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Head of Children’s Department, Flagstaff Public Library; Teen Programming Librarian, Flagstaff Public Library

FROM: Elizabeth Grab, Youth Services Library Specialist, Flagstaff Public Library

SUBJECT: Service proposal for teen zine collection, associated programming, & teen zine publication

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Proposal Overview

With Flagstaff Public Library’s teen users’ preference for passive programming and the space in the Teen Zone magazine rack, I propose a zine collection and paired passive programming. Should those prove successful, they would be followed up by a library-published teen zine. The combination of two, possibly three, of these components could meet teens’ entertainment and information needs while simultaneously connecting them more strongly with the library and its collection.

Curating a non-circulating zine collection around the FPL teens’ interests means that our teens would get entertainment and information tailored for them. The passive make-a-zine programming would provide entertainment, invention, and teen community and collection building. A teen zine publication would serve as the bridge between FPL’s teens and the wider patron population, allowing our teens to shine and feel a greater sense of belonging in the library as a whole.

Cost for zine collection:	Cost for passive zine programming:	Cost for teen zine publication
Zines run from free to roughly \$15. Cost of protective magazine folder for each zine (free the upcoming deaccessioning most of the magazines). Costs of processing labour & materials.	No cost for materials already in supply closet: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• White & coloured papers; stapler; glue sticks; tape; scissors; markers, pens & colored pencils, Donation of magazines & comics solicited from public and Friends of the Library. \$35-50 for colour copies at \$0.15/print to cover the option of donating a photocopy of the original to the library.	Dependent upon length of zine, print quality, size of edition, and whether printed in house or contracted out; likely somewhere between \$75-\$200 for run of 100 lower quality, in house printed magazines.

Service proposal

Providing a curated zine collection with which teens can engage and to which they can contribute their own zines made through the passive programming serves as an ideal means of fulfilling teen information needs within a popular and approachable medium. It is also a tried and true method for connecting teens with information important to them. Most curated zine collections are found at a college level, but programming involving the making of zines and the opportunity to contribute to a zine collection or the creation of a teen zine publication is found across teen and young adult library departments in public and school library settings. The virtue of a zine collection is that zines cover every topic one might wish to investigate, including those recently identified as the priority for teens within their everyday life information seeking (ELIS), the top priorities in no particular order being sports, pop culture, entertainment and social media, identity formation, the future (ie career and college), jobs and finance, school, mental health, physical changes, sexual and reproductive health, dating, religion, family, illicit substances, fandoms, and fashion (Agosto, & Hughes-Hassell, 2006; Fuse Marketing 2019; Hernandez, [2010?]). Comics and manga also ranked as third and fourth as teens' favourite things to read, right after Harry Potter and Twilight (Fuse, 2019), making zines the ideal medium for purveying information because they would actually be interested in engaging with the format.

Fuse also found that teens are almost constantly on their digital devices to entertain themselves, stay connected to their chosen groups, and look up information. Despite this finding, it is important for teens to have access to physical information on these topics, as well as digital. Eynon & Malmberg (2011) found that digital information seeking skills were significantly impacted by the digital IS capabilities within their network of support. Though it seems likely that teen digital information seeking skills may have improved in the intervening eight years, if that network of support around teens has not also improved its digital literacy skills and if not all teens have consistent and regular access to digital technology, then it is best to hedge bets and provide a physical collection—in this case zines—that can provide accurate and reliable information on pertinent topics. Given Flagstaff's unofficial slogan since the 1980s of 'poverty with a view' and the basic computer literacy questions I somewhat regularly received from teens at FPL, it seems wise to err on the side of assuming inconsistent access to ICTs and at least a moderate digital divide.

Zine collection

All of this evidence serves to demand a physical collection tailored for teens covering information that is vital to them. The juvenile nonfiction section of FPL's YS is extensive, but tailored to a younger audience. Teens instead are expected to leave the YS area and search for nonfiction information in the adult portion of the library, which, even as an experienced library user and one trained in library science, can represent an overwhelming experience (Shenton, 2007). It also means acquiring a book on a potentially sensitive or embarrassing topic and walking with it across the library and back into the Teen Zone in YS. Between the well-documented phenomenon of library anxiety amongst teens and the need

for relatively high library literacy (Hernandez, [2010?]), FPL teens face overwhelming obstacles to physical access to important nonfiction information that could significantly impact their lives.¹ This is not helped by the reality that most nonfiction books in adult library collections are not written with teens in mind, potentially making the content irrelevant due to format or approach to the topic (Hernandez, [2010?]). By curating a collection of zines on topics of interest and concern to teens and locating them on the nearby magazine rack in the Teen Zone, the above concerns would be addressed, namely ensuring that teen patrons have ready access to physical information of concern to them in a medium they prefer.

In terms of building the zine collection, it could start out small, with only 5 to 10 zines, which each typically cost between a few dollars to \$15. Though these are self published works and therefore not available via typical publishing channels, Phoenix boasts the Wasted Ink Zine Distro and a number of zine fests at which local or in-state artists come together to talk about and sell their work. If that selection of artists doesn't offer zines on the topics pertinent to teens, then Phoenix's or other zine distro organisations offer the option to source appropriate zines as needed. Should the latter option prove more appealing, the selection process is made easier thanks to lists from zinesters and librarians that cover which zines are good for kids and teens (Freedman, 2008).

Passive program

The next step after displaying the newly curated collection is to solicit teen contributions to the zine collection through passive programming. Introducing a zine collection alone is insufficient. If teens are encouraged to participate by contributing zines of their own to the collection, "it will always reflect the users' tastes, interests, and desires" (Velazquez, 2016), transforming the new collection into an open invitation for expressing creativity, showing off their skills, sharing their thoughts, and making the space even more their own rather than an invasion of the Teen Zone. Using zines as passive programming also works beautifully because it is low budget. All that is required is: scissors, glue sticks, stapler, markers, colored pencils, pens, printer paper, colored paper, and a pile of old magazines and comics.

Since the zines would be housed in the Teen Zone, FPL teens could proceed in the knowledge that fellow teens are the sole audience for this work, potentially providing a sense of safety and in-group privacy that might serve as even greater encouragement for participation. Many public libraries perform active programming through zine workshops, but it also serves as a popular and successful passive program (Indianapolis Public Library, 2019; Carson, 2018; Truman, 2018; City Library, 2019; Mesa Public Library, 2019; Lackawanna County Library System, 2018; Longwood Public Library, 2018; San José Public Library, [n.d.]; San Francisco Public Library, 2019; Chicago Public Library, 2017) (Martinez,

¹ For just one example of the impact of library anxiety on information search performance, see Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao (2004).

2016). I suspect that part of the reason for this success is that the creation of zines for one's self and for the collection inspires similar outcomes of community partnership and connectedness as those resulting from community-based participatory research with teens (Merves, 2015).

Teen zine publication

Following the analog for the digital information space model of “personal work space, group work space, and outer space” for teens proposed by Loertscher (2007), however, suggests that this proposal would be most effective in engaging FPL teen users by pairing the zine collection and passive zine programming with an out-group accessible form of creative expression, the ‘outer space.’ In this case, the third stage of Loertscher’s model would take the form of a teen zine publication, an idea that other public libraries have successfully implemented in which the teens share their visual and textual creative outputs, which are then gathered, printed, and distributed to the wider library community (Tanzi, 2018; Rambo & Tanzi, 2019) (Huntley Area Public Library, 2019; Pasadena Library & Information Services, 2019; Phoenix Public Library, 2013; Northbrook Public Library, 2019; Mendez, 2019). The teen zine publication would allow for teens to connect with the wider FPL community, lending them a sense of pride in themselves and of belonging in the FPL beyond just the Teen Zone. Following the model of Huntley Area Public Library’s Teen Zine—which has maintained quarterly releases since 2008—YS could solicit creative objects such as “original short stories, poems, reviews (of books, movies, music, or video games), jokes, tips, true stories, essays, journalistic reporting, interviews, letters, photos, comics, drawings and/or other artwork” (Huntley, 2019).

Supporting Documentation

As an exercise in better understanding the public served by the public library, I chose to examine a collection and program specifically designed to serve the information needs and behaviours of the Flagstaff Public Library (FPL) patrons between the ages of 12 to 18 who use the Teen Zone. When the Teen Services librarian, Hope Brosseau, informed me that the FPL teens are particularly skittish and require passive rather than active programming, it got me wondering how we can make sure that we are fulfilling the information needs of this population given that they are the least likely to actively or deliberately let us know what they need.² Out of this curiosity grew the following investigation into the general information needs and behaviours of American teens and specific information about Flagstaff and Coconino County’s teens. Greater knowledge of this population and successful attempts in other settings to provide teens the proposed service leads me to propose a zine collection, associated creative programming, and a teen zine publication structured and presented so that it operates in accordance with this population’s preferred information seeking behaviours (ie not from in-person figures of authority like a librarian)

² I use the term passive programming in the same sense as middle and upper school librarian Kate Lewallen (2017): Passive programs “attract students into the library without having planned, specific events” and involve “set[ting] out the supplies and some instructions, and let[ting] it go.”

while providing them information and entertainment pertinent to their age bracket. All curators, collectors, and makers of zines struggle to define 'zine' (Bartell, 2004), but zines are most simply, if loosely, defined as cheaply-produced, highly-reproducible, self-published, blended text-and-image pamphlets on any topic an author might dream up. In many ways, it is best understood as a medium rather than a genre. The medium includes everything from Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) to Kanye West's Yeezy footwear zine (2016).

Since my arrival in YS this summer, the passive programming for the teens has remained a large sheet of paper mounted on the bulletin board on which the teens are encouraged to draw. The paper is brimming with pencil drawings. Based on this observation, as well as Hope's description of the teens using YS, these teens are creative and clearly open to passive programming in which they share that inventiveness. This falls within the expected results of teen information behaviours as observed in the scholarly literature. This group is interested in engagement, but on their terms: avoiding feeling directed, allowed to engage when and how it suits them, enabled to engage independently and privately, and feeling their contributions can be made anonymously if they so choose. Passive programming allows for all of these dynamics.

Conclusion

Teens are a tough age to serve. They are more reticent to share their information needs with librarians and are not often interested in participating in programming. This combination makes it challenging to ensure that library staff are doing all they can to serve this age group's needs to the same level as younger patrons. Curating a zine collection around research-revealed interests, as well as those staff have observed in FPL's population of teens, means that teens are getting entertainment and information tailored for them. The passive programming provides that opportunity for entertainment, invention, and teen community building. The teen zine publication would serve as the bridge between FPL's teens and wider patron population, allowing our teens to shine and feel a greater sense of belonging in the library as a whole.

Summary of current knowledge about Coconino County and Flagstaff teens and American teens' information needs & behaviours

The estimated population of Coconino County in 2018 was 142,854 (American FactFinder, 2019). According to census records from 2017, the teen population (12-17 years old) was 10,824, of which 6,731 are just White, 764 are African American, and 2,271 are Latino. Curiously, the census records distilled through FactFinder didn't indicate whether a teen Native America, though Coconino County contained a 25% Native American population as recently as 2015 (Bowie, 2018). 10,533 teens are enrolled in school, and 41% of the total teen population is in the labour force (American FactFinder, 2019). In 2017, 6,033 households contained related children, 5,432 of which were the children of the householder. 996 of those households contained children both under the age of 6 and between 6-17. 3,191 households contained children only between the ages of 6-17. 601

households contained children under the age of 18 that were not the kids of the householder (FactFinder, 2019).

In terms of information needs, teen information seeking priorities fall primarily within their everyday life information seeking (ELIS) and include—in no particular order—sports, pop culture, entertainment and social media, identity formation, the future (ie career and college), present jobs and finance, school, mental health, physical changes, sexual and reproductive health, dating, religion, family, illicit substances, fandoms, and fashion (Agosto, & Hughes-Hassell, 2006; Fuse Marketing 2019; Hernandez, [2010?]). Within reading interests, comics and manga ranked third and fourth as teens' favourite things to read, right after Harry Potter and Twilight (Fuse, 2019), and given that most of the reference requests that I receive from the 12 to 15 age bracket for both boys and girls involve questions about our graphic novel and manga options, I find this unsurprising. Teens 15+ rarely ask reference questions, but I do see them reading. What they have chosen to read I do not know, but given the popularity of our graphic novel and manga sections, the relative pristineness of the untouched shelves in all but the YA S-F section, and Fuse's findings, it seems likely that our teens, too, prefer comics and manga. Committed interest in this genre of illustrative storytelling suggests that our teens would likely respond well to a zine collection curated for them.

Teen information behaviours are greatly influenced by their support network and social capital (Moore, 2016). Eynon & Malmberg (2011) found that digital information seeking skills were significantly impacted by the digital information seeking capabilities within their network of support. Given these two papers' conclusions, American teens are deeply influenced in their information behaviours by human interaction. One human influencer from which teens are not interested in hearing is the librarian (Agosto, 2005), perhaps explaining why even the teens who use the library are remote and largely uninterested in interaction with staff (Hernandez, [2010?]). Despite, or perhaps indeed because of this disinterest in interacting with librarians for information, it is vital that teens are allotted a space of their own in which they can operate independently. To cap it off, library and search related anxiety significant and well-documented, especially among older teens starting college (Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Shenton, 2007). Given all of this, FPL actually maintains a respectable and robust user population of teens.

Interestingly, when properly included in research and space building, teens can develop a strong sense of belonging in the library even beyond just the teen-allotted space (Velasquez, 2016; Merves, 2015). The digital information space model of "personal work space, group work space, and outer space" for teens proposed by Loertscher (2007) also shows how teens might be more effectively engaged because it displays the structure by which teens prefer to arrange their information spaces. Though they are reluctant to participate in organised events, teens do crave group and larger community interaction with information provision and sharing.

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