

PROGRAMMING FOR YOUNG ADULTS

By

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"Perhaps nothing is more perplexing than the task of programming."
--Patrick Jones

DEFINITION

YALSA defines it as "a library - sponsored event (or activity), inside or outside the library, which appeals to a group rather than an individual. A program can be informational, recreational, educational or all three."

I would add a fourth: Cultural.

(Note: the word "program" in this context is different from what is often called a cc program of service;" "service" is a term used to describe all of the activities offered by libraries for their users)

WHY OFFER PROGRAMS?

They are an essential aspect of service to young adults. Indeed, one of the basic competencies listed in YALSA's "Young Adults Deserve the Very Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Young Adults" is: "Design, implement, and evaluate specific programs and activities, both in the library and in the community, for young adults based on their needs and interests."

To raise the library's profile and provide a means of publicizing materials and services the library can offer to teens.

To attract YAs to the library who might not otherwise come.

To increase YA usage of the library.

To help us meet the needs and interests of this user group. And, in so doing, help us meet our mission.

To provide teens with life information that may not be available elsewhere.

To give kids a positive library experience. To get them excited about the library. To get them talking about the library and what a neat place it is.

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To make teens lifelong library users -- and supporters!

To empower teens by involving them in the programs -- in planning and decisionmaking.

To build a sense of community. To help kids feel they belong.

To demonstrate the library cares.

PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING & EVALUATING PROGRAMS

PLANNING

A. TYPE:

1. **Educational?**- Internet training. How to use the library.
2. **Cultural** - Poetry reading. Writing workshop, Art show.
3. **Informational** - Career day. Health issues.
4. **Recreational** - Car show. Skateboarding demonstration.

B. FORMAT :

1. **Passive**; e.g., unsupervised board games, contests (trivia, stump the librarian), "talk back to books programs;" i.e., design a book review form inviting kids to use it to review books they've read; put the forms in book pockets; then post the completed forms on a bulletin board and/or keep them in a loose leaf notebook or on the library's web page (you could kick this off by doing a program on how to review books)
2. **Audience Event**: speaker, panel discussion, video presentation.
3. **Activity**: workshop, summer reading program, library scavenger hunt
4. One time, short term, long term. Think about planning a calendar of programs a year in advance; that way you can be sure to have a mix of types, formats, and audiences. You can also decide -- and commit to -- a certain number of programs.

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C. PROGRAM IDEAS?

1. **Brainstorm.** Talk with colleagues and teens.
2. **Read** teen magazines.
3. **Consult** the librarian's best friend, *Chases's Calendar of Events* (October is "Fall in Love with Fond Du Lac" month!)
4. **Subscribe** to YALSA-L, YALSA-BK, and YA-YAAC (Send e-mail to listproc@ala1.ala.org; leave subject line blank. Message: subscribe YALSA-BK (or YALSA-L or YA-YAAC) first name last name.
5. **Visit** YALSA's web site: www.ala.org/yalsa/
6. **Check** VOYA, JOYS, and School Library Journal articles (and SLJ's "Practically Speaking" column).
7. **Network** with other area libraries. Get together to share ideas.
8. **Borrow** ideas from books like Sizzling Summer Reading Programs for Young Adults by Katherine Kan and Excellence in Library Service To Young Adults by Mary K. Chelton. And check out the other articles and books on the attached bibliography.
9. **Tie-in:** "A common concern about library programs is finding the tie-in to the library." (McGuire, p. 193) Don't let that concern stop you. Teens aren't worried about it. Teenager Adam Balutis writes, on YALSA-BK, "It (a non-book program) may not be what libraries were meant for, but I love it, and I don't think I'm the only one."
10. **Keep** a program idea bank (i.e., a list of program possibilities). Plan a series. Regularly scheduled programs help build an audience.
11. **Bells and Whistles?** It doesn't have to be elaborate. Sometimes simple programs are the best. And be practical; i.e., can you really do it? From YALSA-BK: a YA librarian writes: "I think sometimes we try to think of fun and interesting programs when all the teens want is to be together in a comfortable environment. We had a game night where the youth brought in board games and I had some, too. We had a scavenger hunt, did a Mad Lib, ate pizza and played board games. The program lasted 2 1/2hours. The teens want to do it again!"

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12. **Who** is the audience? Boys, girls, both?

13. **All Alone by the Telephone?** You're not alone. Don't try to do everything yourself. Ask other staff to be involved. Make a list of local resource people and their areas of expertise. **Do a coop. Program!**

- a. Talk to public librarians
 - b. Talk to other local youth serving organizations. Find out what has worked for them. Ask them for their assessment of what's needed. Find out how they can help. Would they like to co-sponsor a program? They may also be able to provide a ready made audience, some members of which have never been in the library before. Some allies to consider: vocational/technical schools, colleges/universities, museums, zoos, artists, photographers, writers groups/workshops, gaming groups, performing arts groups (theatrical, musical, dance), radio/TV stations, professional organizations/associations (especially helpful with career days), Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, FFA, Junior Achievement; other city/county departments (especially Recreation and Parks), YMCA/YWCA, Red Cross, social and counseling agencies, drug and suicide prevention programs. For more see Gale Research's [Youth-Serving Organization Directory](#).
14. **What's in a Name?** Naming the program. Avoid dorky titles. Which would a teen prefer: "Halloween Tales for Teens" or "The Howling Blood and Guts Horror Hour"? Run titles by teens.
15. **When?** Scheduling. When is the best time for the program or for programs in general? Again, ask teens. Does the Chamber of Commerce maintain a community calendar? What else is going on in the world? (I once unwittingly scheduled a program opposite the Super Bowl) How often will you have programs? Weekly? Monthly? Annually? Will you repeat programs?, e.g., might you hold a library orientation program each fall or have Teen Read Week programs each October?
16. **Where** will the program be? Sometimes outside the library may be the best place.
17. **The Buy-In:** Getting staff/teacher support

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IMPLEMENTING

- A. **WITH WHOM ARE YOU COOPERATING?**
- B. **Who's in charge? Someone has to be; otherwise nothing will get done.**
- C. **Funding? Make a budget. What expenses might you incur? Speaker's fee. Travel expense. Meal(s). Staff time. Purchase of supplies/materials (including film and processing, blank videotapes). Books. Equipment purchase/rental. Printing. Photocopying. Mailing. Phone. Refreshments. Overhead.**
- D. Get it in writing. "It" means everything, including licenses, permits, contracts, letters of confirmation, etc.
- E. Registration? Tickets? (Ticketed events have a certain cachet!)
- F. Make a checklist of everything you need to do (see p. 7).
- G. Do a timeline and assign responsibilities. Give yourself enough time! Programs aren't built in a day.
- H. Promotion: Press release, Public Service Announcement (Have you made connections at the newspaper and radio/TV stations? How far in advance do they want your releases and announcements? If you're not sure of format, ask for samples). Does the newspaper have a calendar of community activities? Post on library's Homepage (if you have one). Do an article for the library or Friends' newsletter and for local schools' student papers. Post signs and fliers at local schools and in local stores and teen hang-outs. Do you have a mailing list? Promote not only out-of-library but in-library (though never limit your publicity to in-house): signs, posters, flyers at public desks. Displays. Word-of-mouth. Have a telephone tree; i.e., you and your teens call past program attendees and tell them about/remind them of the next program. Announcement in library right before program if you have a P-A system, if you don't, be a one-person people posse; walk around and tell kids about the program, invite them to attend. Have a collection of relevant books available for program attendees to check out.
- I. Alert the media! (not the same as sending out a press release)
- J. Notify the rest of the staff about what's going on.

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- K. Practice Imaging. Sit down by yourself in a quiet place without distractions and do a mental walk-through of the program, visualizing anything and everything you need and what could go wrong. Do you have an extra bulb for the projector? Do you have an extra extension cord? If you plug in two coffeepots, will you blow a fuse? And if you do, do you know where the fuse box is? Have you tested the microphone? Have you contacted the speaker to confirm? What if you have an overflow crowd? If the program is to be held outdoors, what are your contingency plans if the weather doesn't cooperate? Can you take the program indoors? Do you have a rain date?
- L. **DON'T FORGET THE REFRESHMENTS!**
- M. Be sure to have library card applications available.
- N. **DON'T FORGET THE REFRESHMENTS!**
- O. Announce next program at end of the one you're doing.
- P. Take pictures and post them around the library.
- Q. What about clean-up?

EVALUATION

- A. Don't be discouraged if the numbers are small.
- B. Have an evaluation form to hand out.
- C. What went right? What went wrong? Do a post mortem as soon as possible.
- D. What did you forget to put on your checklist?
- E. Send thank-you notes.
- F. Keep records. They'll help when you're planning and budgeting for next year's programs. But forget about a cost-benefit analysis.
- G. You can't always quantify success. How do you attach numbers to an enhanced image of the library?

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CHECKLIST

PROGRAM TITLE _____

STAFF MEMBER IN CHARGE _____

DATE/DAY _____ TIME (START/END) _____

LOCATION _____

ROOM RESERVED _____

SPEAKER NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ FAX _____ E ?MAIL _____

REGISTRATION/TICKETS _____

MATERIALS/SUPPLIES _____

EQUIPMENT:

MICROPHONE _____ PROJECTOR _____ SLIDE _____

PROJECTOR _____ OVERHEAD _____ TAPE RECORDER _____

VCR _____ FLIP CHART(S) _____ EASEL(S) _____ CAMERA _____

ROOM SETUP: PODIUM _____ TABLES _____ CHAIRS _____

EXPECTED ATTENDANCE _____

REFRESHMENTS _____

PUBLICITY: PRESS RELEASE(S) _____ PSA(S) _____ MAILING _____

FLYERS _____ DISPLAY _____ POSTERS _____ OTHER _____

MEDIA NOTIFIED _____

STAFF NOTIFIED _____

PHOTOGRAPH EVENT _____ VIDEOTAPE EVENT _____

ROOM CLEANUP _____

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POPULAR PROGRAM IDEAS

Teen Read Week. For great program ideas visit the Teen Read Week Web Site:

www.ala.org/teenread/

Drive To Read @ Your Library

Booktalks (Read "The Inner Game of Booktalking" by Sheila Anderson and Kristine Mahood in VOYA. June 2001, pp. 107-110 and "Extreme Booktalking" by Anne Guevara and John Sexton in VOYA. June 2000, pp. 98-101)

Book Discussion Groups (e.g., TAB, the Teen Advisory Board program co-sponsored by the Arlington County (VA) Public Library and the Arlington Public Schools. Contact Margaret Brown: mbrown3@co.arlington.va.us).

Getting started: Persuade a couple of teens to promise to attend and, perhaps, to put the muscle on some of their friends to join them.

The first meeting is organizational.

You'll need a discussion leader -- that will probably be you at the outset. Afterward, rotate the assignment among the teens. The leader needs to prepare 15-20 questions in advance. Publishers provide reading group guides that are useful ?and free!

Naming the program. The Kalamazoo (MI) Public Library has a group that meets on the last Thursday of each month. Starting at 7 p.m., it's called "Pizza and Pages." (most of these programs are 60-75 minutes in duration) A local pizzeria donates five pizzas per meeting. Other libraries have "Books and Bagels" groups (e.g., Novi Middle School, Novi, MI) or "Brown Bag Lunch Book Discussion Groups" [see "Teens Test Best Books in Public/School Library Book Groups" by Kitty Krahnke in VOYA. December 1999, pp. 318-319]. Obviously the stomach-mind connection is important!

You'll need multiple copies of the book(s). The Kalamazoo Library buys twenty copies of each book (!) (paperbacks, I presume) but keeps them in a separate collection so they can be recycled some years down the line. Other libraries interlibrary loan copies. What's new in paperback? See *Kliatt*. Also *SLJ* publishes lists of new paperbacks in May and November and VOYA features a "Paperback Update" column four times per year.

(See "Reading Adolescents: Book Clubs for YA Readers" by Cindy O'Donnell Allen and Bud Hunt. ENGLISH JOURNAL. 90:3. January 200 1, p. 82-89)

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What if getting multiple copies is impossible? Some libraries tell kids to bring their own individual favorite books and talk about them (roughly five minutes apiece). Or some librarians will booktalk a number of titles and then ask the kids to vote on which one(s) (four-five) they want to discuss the next time. Kids could share the limited copies available so that more than one kid had read the books to be discussed.

Or the groups will select a favorite author or genre or theme; e.g., "Next month we'll be talking about Robert Cormier/mysteries/the Titanic/Outstanding Books for the College Bound. Bring your favorite." If you're featuring an author, you might ask for a volunteer or two to prepare a presentation about the life and times of the author.

When you're discussing multiple titles, the librarian will prepare an annotated bibliography of all the books discussed for distribution at the next meeting.

You will need to establish a model for book discussion in the form of a number of questions the kids need to ask themselves: e.g., What was the book about? Who were your favorite characters? What did you especially like/dislike about the book? Patrick Jones suggests casting the movie version or creating alternative endings.

Some like to have an icebreaker activity at the beginning or crafts at the end, e.g., after the kids discussed WHIRLIGIG, they made pinwheels.

To stimulate attendance, be sure to call each participant and remind her/him of the next meeting.

Partners in Reading (Iowa City Community School District. Contact: Pat Schnack. South East Junior High School. 2323 Mayfield Road. Iowa City, IA 52245. [319] 339-6823)

Read-Alouds (you read; the kids listen and eat snacks)

Book Buddies (teens reading to/with younger kids; see the "Seventeen Read Aloud Project" @ www.ala.org/teenread/celebrate_main.html)

Author Visits/Literature Festival (see "Celebrate Reading: A Literature Festival for the Whole Community" by Chris Carlson and Chris Sherman. VOYA. December 2000, pp. 328-330. For what NOT to do, read Daniel Pinkwater's hilarious AUTHOR'S DAY. Aladdin Books. 1997.

Virtual Author Visits

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Coffee House/Open Mic poetry readings (see "Mix Teens with Poetry" articles in VOYA April 1999)

Creative Writing and poetry workshops

Literary Magazine or Library Newsletter (Patrick Jones offers tips for starting a literary magazine in first edition of CONNECTING ... pp.181-185)

Movies (watching and discussing)

Book Movie/Web site reviewing

Anime (Japanese animation) and **Manga** (Japanese comics) These programs are great ways to promote your graphic novel collection. An invaluable web site is <http://www.Sirius.com/~cowpunk/Libguide.html>

Cartooning

Storytelling

Reader's Theater

Theater Workshops

Red Cross Emergency Care/CPR

Crafts (pottery, painting, jewelry, tie-dye, beading, t-shirt stamping, macrame/hemp chokers, locker mirrors, etc.)

College Preparation / Career Day Workshops [e.g., "Destination Success: College and Job Planning Fair for Teens," sponsored by the Los Angeles Public Library] (see also "Books, Bytes & Bucks" by Katie O'Dell Madison in VOYA. October 1998, pp. 258-260).

Summer Job / Workshop

Murder Mysteries (written, directed and performed by teens; see "Murder We Wrote . . . And Played" by Francisca Goldsmith. VOYA. February 1998, p. 367+)

Game Tournaments; e.g., Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, Magic the Gathering tournaments (Must be sure to hole punch the cards so they won't disappear!)

Creative Memory (i.e., scrapbooks)

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An Annotated Bibliography For Further Reading

Prepared by Michael Cart

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Goldsmith, Francisca. "Murder We Wrote ... and Played." Who-done-its in the stacks at the Berkeley Public Library. *VOYA*. February 1998. p. 367+ (**This issue contains profiles of five other replicable YA programs**)

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