

THE LIBRARY CONNECTION

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Diane Tuccillo is no stranger to the world of young adult literature. She has been Senior Librarian/YA Coordinator at the City of Mesa Library in Arizona since 1980, and she has recently completed a three-year term on the ALAN Executive Board. A frequent presenter at ALAN Workshops and at other professional conferences, she has written articles for ALAN Review, VOYA, Kliatt and other publications; she serves as a book reviewer for School Library Journal and VOYA.

In our conversations over the years I have been intrigued by the services her library offers to its patrons who are interested in young adult literature. Recently I asked her if she'd share with the ALAN audience the kinds of opportunities that her public library creates as well as her ideas about the ways in which public librarians and secondary school teachers can collaborate. In this column she presents a tremendous amount of information that both librarians and public school teachers can use in getting their students hooked on young adult literature. —jnm

Getting Teens Hooked on Reading: What Public Librarians Can Do for Teachers Today

Diane P. Tuccillo

Fifteen years ago, I wrote an article for *The ALAN Review* about the same topic I am addressing and updating today. Although the basic philosophical principles discussed in that article are still effective, the processes we use to help teachers promote lifelong reading among students have changed as a result of advances in media formats and other technologies. For instance, in 1987, a number of libraries still had card catalogs, while today it would be difficult to find a library without an online catalog and patron Internet service. Audiovisuals have greatly improved in variety of subjects, availability and formats. These elements have greatly influenced how we serve our public.

Even we librarians have changed our higher educational requirements to reflect these and other technological conditions. For example, taking computer research courses is now as important to a library degree as learning collection development or reader advisory, and even those classes incorporate computer instruction.

Despite the increased focus on technology, those of us who work with children and teenagers in libraries still study their literature, promote it, and look forward to cooperating with teachers and school librarians to help students learn about and benefit from it. The essence of the matter is that teachers and youth librarians serve the same clientele and both understand the importance of books and reading. During the times when school is not in session—weekdays after hours, weekends, evenings, school vacations, and in some cases on certain holidays, students have the option of accessing the public library for educational, informational, recreational and research purposes. Providing avenues for them to learn about the library, what books and other materials they can find there, and encouraging them to participate in library programs and activi-

ties can mesh with classroom objectives, extend their use of and exposure to the written word, and lead them on a path of lifelong reading and library usage beyond their secondary school years.

Programs/Services Public Librarians Can Provide Booktalking

A booktalking program is one of the most effective ways for public librarians to reach teenagers. When a public librarian comes to a classroom or school library to visit with students, it provides an opportunity for the librarian to give a brief orientation to the library in general, to share information about library programs and activities specifically for teens, and to introduce sample titles from the young adult collection through booktalks.

Teachers and school librarians can likewise incorporate booktalking techniques to promote reading to students. Booktalking is attractive because it can be done for a large group, a small group or even one-on-one. It is an effective means for connecting teens and books.

According to Jennifer Bromann in *Booktalking That Works*, some purposes for booktalking include building public library and school relationships and cooperation, and strengthening ties with schools, school librarians and teachers. However, the most important goal is to get teens who do not read to do so. Bromann observes: "The goal of booktalking is not necessarily to sell particular books as much as it is to sell the idea of reading. The point is to leave every listener with a good impression of books and the library, even if they never pick up a book you tell them about. Booktalking is not about *making* them read. When book report time comes around, however, students may be looking for that book they vaguely remember hearing about" (11).

If you are not familiar with the art of booktalking, perhaps you are wondering what a booktalk *is*. Think of it simply as a commercial for a book, told in storytelling form but leaving the listener hanging. You might also compare it to the trailers shown in movie theaters for forthcoming films. The point is to entice students to check out the books and find out what happens for themselves, simply because their curiosity has been sparked.

There have been few changes in how school booktalking programs have been done in the last fifteen years. Still, there are many more and a wider variety of YA books from which librarians can choose for presentations. The presentations allow librarians to inform students about the latest library holdings, such as audiobooks, other kinds of audio-visuals, popular teen magazines, and special formats like graphic novels, in addition to mainstream fiction and non-fiction.

Librarians can model booktalks for students, and some teachers give students the option to present booktalks en lieu of book reports. A few students have taken this one step farther, like the Coalition of Teen Advisors (<http://www.teenmatrix.org/>) at the Chandler Public Library in Arizona, who taped themselves performing booktalks which are shown on the local cable television station as well as on the in-school channel.

Since the Accelerated Reader Program has become a trend in many schools, librarians can use booktalking to help promote the book choices. A number of schools in Mesa provide us at the public library with binders of their AR lists so that students can find the books in our library as well as in their school libraries. Some teachers request booktalks based on the AR books and I then tailor my presentations to those titles. You can ask your librarian if this might be an option if you are doing AR.

Arranging school visits for booktalks has become a much more widespread practice. Check with your local public librarian to see if this service is available in your community.

Teen Library Web Pages

School visits also give librarians a chance to explain about the resources available on library web pages, especially services directed toward teens. Often these teen library web pages include reading lists teens may access to find good books, opportunities to submit book reviews, and to find out what other teens are recommending. Our Teen web page for the City of Mesa Library has a section called *What Do I Read Next?* (<http://www.mesalibrary.org/teens/readnext.htm>), and many libraries have similar sections, often including input from teen library advisors. Most libraries also link outstanding reading web sites from other libraries and organizations on their web pages.

As a matter of fact, YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) and VOYA (*Voice of Youth Advocates*) magazine have developed a new national reading program called Teen Top Ten/YA Galley, which will be promoted on the web. Through the program, teens can vote online for their top ten favorite YA books published each year. Voting takes place during Teen Read Week in mid-October via the *Teen Hoopla: An Internet Guide for Teens* web site (<http://www.ala.org/teenhoopla/>). Find out program details in the December 2002 issue of VOYA and learn how your teen readers can get involved.

Teen Advisory Boards

Teen library advisory groups have become a mainstay of many libraries in the last fifteen years. These groups encourage teens to participate actively in their libraries, promote positive youth development, which can foster the Search Institute's 40 Assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>), and provide an opportunity for teens to contribute to their communities through the Service Learning Program at their schools.

At the City of Mesa Library, we have a teen advisory group called the Young Adult Advisory Council, or YAAC for short. This group of about thirty teens, representing most of the junior and senior high schools in Mesa, meets twice a month to review books and plan activities. They serve as official library volunteers and help out as needed. Their monthly newsletter, *Open Shelf*, is distributed in all three City of Mesa Library branches and at each junior and senior high school. Delivering copies is a cooperative effort with Mesa Public Schools Media Services, which sends them along with their audiovisual bags. In addition, current and archival issues of *Open Shelf* are available online (<http://www.mesalibrary.org/teens/readinglists/openshelf.htm>). Several teachers in Mesa use the printed version of *Open Shelf* in their classrooms to encourage independent reading or for assignments, and copies are on display as handouts in the media centers.

Other school and public libraries have similar groups, providing opportunities for members to offer peer reader advisory and promote library programs and services to teens. If this kind of group does not exist in your community or school library, you may want to suggest that one be started. If there already is such a group, you may want to encourage qualified teens to participate.

Library-Published Teen Literary Magazines

At the City of Mesa Library, we publish an annual teen literary magazine called *FRANK*. *FRANK* consists of original poetry, short stories, essays, artwork and black/white photography by and for teens. Teens also volunteer on the *FRANK* editorial staff. Although many schools have their own literary magazines, magazines such as *FRANK* give students additional avenues to see their work in print and to work with other students from throughout the community. We encourage teachers to tell their students about *FRANK* and persuade them to contribute their work. Find out more about *FRANK* at <http://www.mesalibrary.org/teens/frank.htm>.

Teen literary magazines are becoming more common in other libraries as well. Some are online, some in print, and some are in both formats. The Phoenix Public Library publishes a 'zine called *Create!*, which also appears on their web page at <http://www.phoenixtecentral.org/twebapp/teenzine.jsp>. *The Seven Hills Review* is a teen ezine published through the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. It can be found at <http://teenspace.cincinnati.library.org/sevenhillsreview/>. Both are excellent examples of publications by teens for teens. Students can submit their creative work to a variety of forums like these having Internet connections.

Tours

The public library makes a perfect setting for an inexpensive field trip that can greatly benefit students. At the City of Mesa Library, we give groups of students tours of our Young

Adult section and the rest of the library, explain programs and services, and teach them how to use the computer effectively for personal information as well as for research. Most teachers arrange a tour with computer lessons, allowing additional time for the students to explore the library on their own or to work on a specified project. We often see students who are brought to the library for a tour returning later on their own time.

Again, check with your local library to see what kinds of tours are provided. You will also want to ask if computer and research instruction are also offered.

Reading/Research/Professional Materials

Public librarians can give recommendations on the latest books for teens and can provide bibliographies. Bibliographies are frequently found online on a library's web page in addition to being available in print. The City of Mesa Library publishes seventh, eighth, and ninth grade selected reading lists that teachers and school librarians are welcome to use with their students. Some libraries offer Literature Study collections, which consist of multiple copies of popular titles for classroom study and which teachers can check out for an extended period of time.

We can also recommend useful professional resources for working with teens, books and reading. Many journal subscriptions and expensive reference books are beyond most school budgets, but the public library is more likely to be able to afford at least the best and most useful, and can share those resources with teachers. Find out what your library has to offer.

Internet Access

Besides having teen-oriented web pages, many public libraries have web pages for educators. Check out the Educators web page for the City of Mesa Library: <http://www.mesalibrary.org/kids/teachers.htm>. You will find an impressive array of links for professional resources, reading information, educational materials, statistics and more. Your local library may have a similar page.

Even the American Library Association has gotten involved in developing an outstanding web page for educators, called *Sites for Parents, Caregivers, Teachers and Others Who Care about Kids* <http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/parent.html#c>. Another resource is The Internet Public Library, which has resources on their *Teachers & Administrators* page, located at <http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/edu70.00.00/>.

Meetings

Public librarians are usually willing to attend school faculty meetings to explain what the library has to offer and find out what the school needs from them. Think about inviting your public librarian to your school's staff meetings once or twice a year. Some librarians are also willing to host meetings at the library itself for Reading and English teachers and/or Media Specialists. Find out if connecting in this manner will work for your school and public library. You may be pleasantly surprised at what develops from the interactions at these meetings in sharing information and planning new ways to reach and teach teens.

Final Thoughts

Youth services librarians are eager to serve our young people and to help them develop a lifelong love of reading and appreciation for literature, goals to which teachers also aspire. We also want to encourage them to become lifelong library users and supporters, complete with knowledge and skills to navigate the spectrum of computer applications. Computers and other technologies have inundated our world, and they have helped to foster widespread communication and reading/writing opportunities. In most cases, libraries and schools have adapted well to this new environment and are successfully utilizing it to benefit students. However, an even better way to succeed is for schools and libraries to work together. Find out what public librarians can do for you—we are here to help!

Works Cited

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Diane P. Tuccillo's book VOYA Guide to Teen Library Advisory Groups is forthcoming from Scarecrow Press.