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young adult library services

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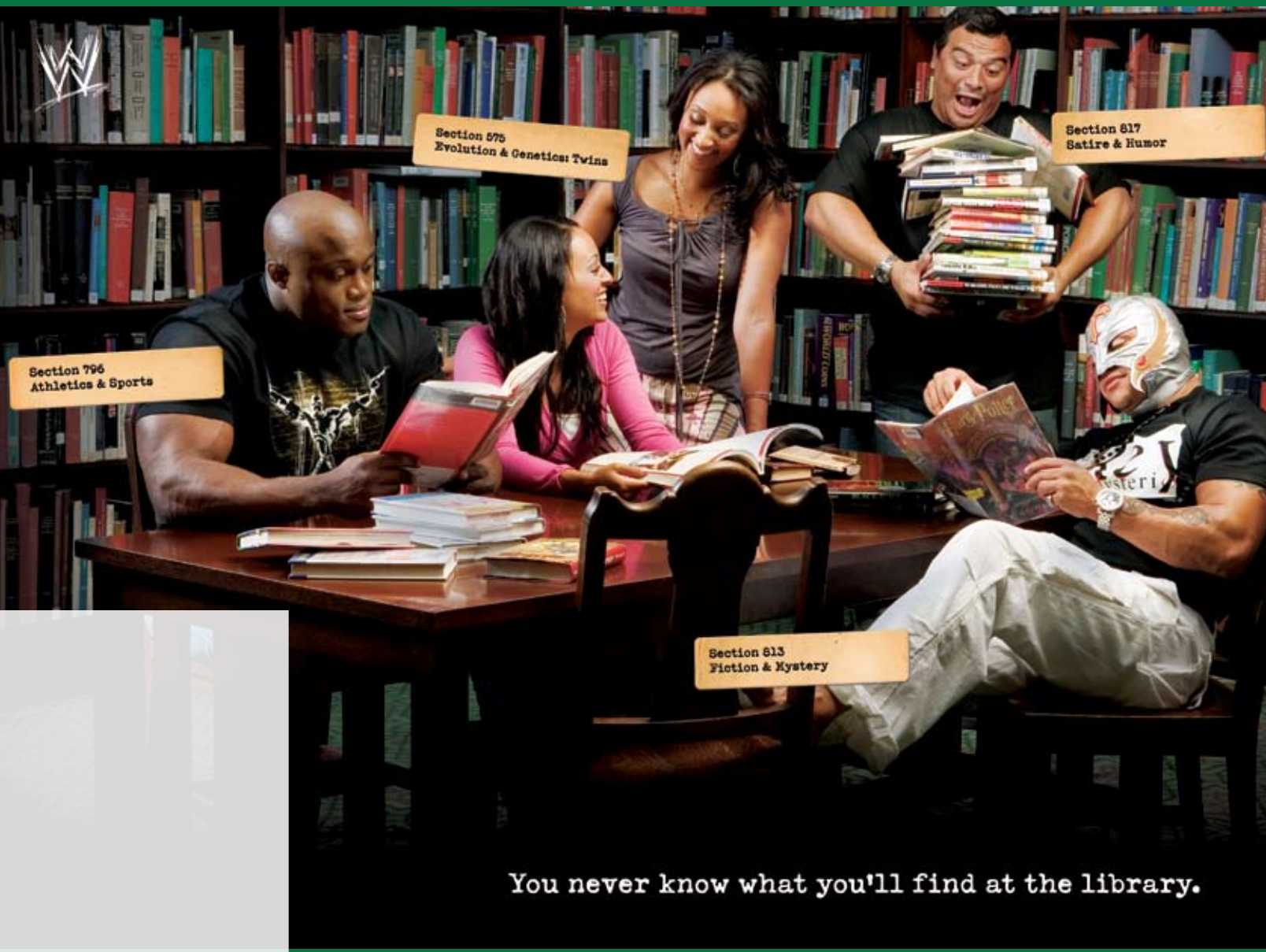


You never know what you'll find at the library.

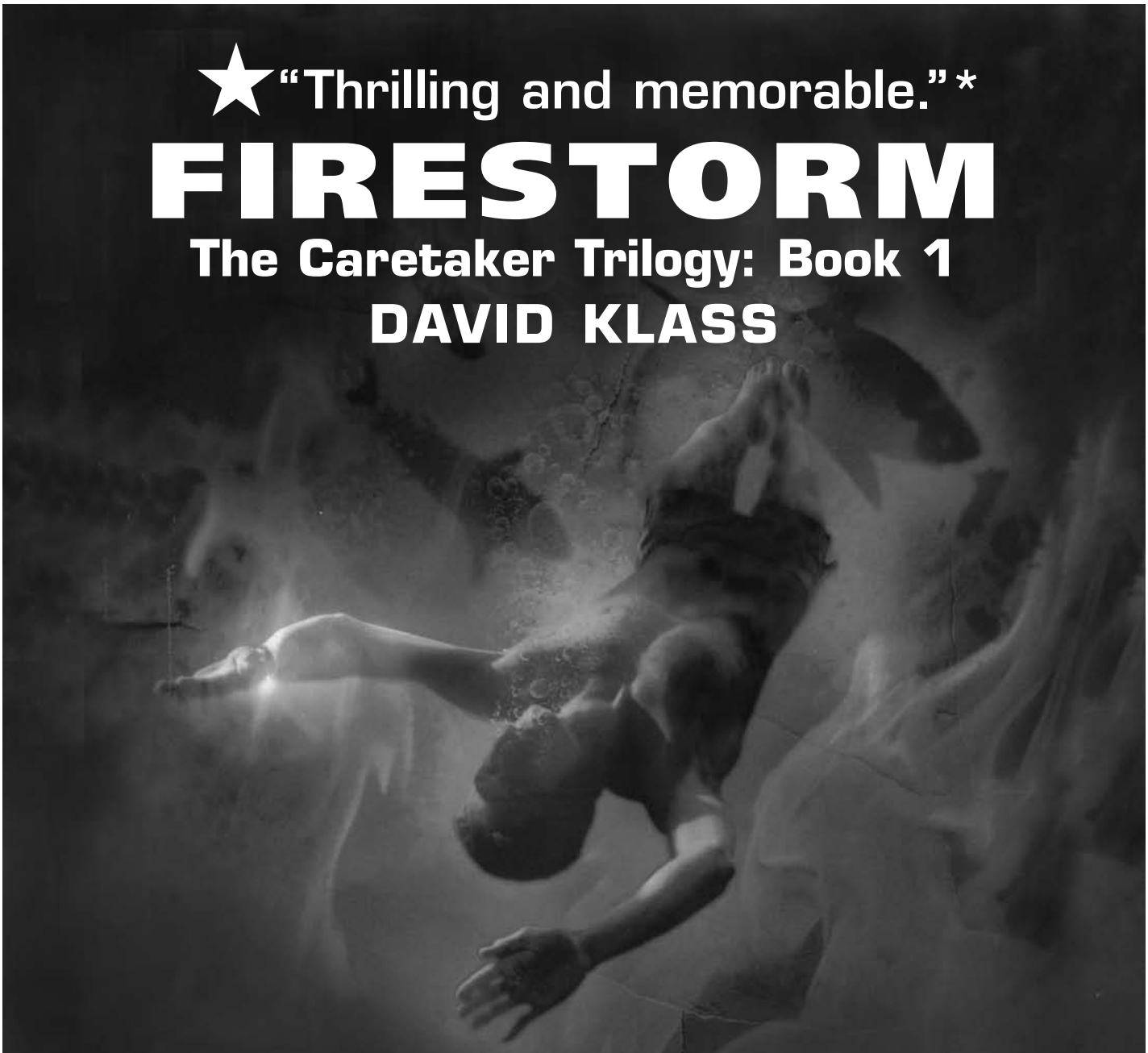
IN THIS ISSUE:

★"Thrilling and memorable."*

FIRESTORM

The Caretaker Trilogy: Book 1

DAVID KLASS



★"Klass enters exciting and provocative new territory with this sci-fi thriller. Seventeen-year-old Jack Danielson's life has always been normal—except that his [adoptive] parents have encouraged him to blend in and not try too hard. But then he learns that he is different, that he has special powers and abilities, and that he is from the future and has been sent back to save the planet . . . The cliff-hanger ending will make readers hope that Klass's work on book two of the trilogy is well under way."

—*Starred, *School Library Journal*

"The book is packed with high-intensity thrills . . . Klass' protagonist comes off as a regular guy . . . and [his] surprising fate will leave readers waiting eagerly for the second installment in the Caretaker Trilogy."

—*Booklist*

"A gripping tale of the relentless and unnecessary harm we humans have done to our earth . . . This is a book every environmentally conscious school science program should make required reading."

—Gerd Leipold, Executive Director, Greenpeace International

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Statement of Purpose
Young Adult Library Services is the official journal of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association. *YALS* primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education for librarians serving young adults, ages twelve through eighteen. It will include articles of current interest to the profession, act as a showcase for best practices, provide news from related fields, and will spotlight significant events of the organization and offer in-depth reviews of professional literature. *YALS* will also serve as the official record of the organization.

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from the Editor

Valerie A. Ott

Back to Basics

When the average person thinks of a library, the image of books is sure to come to mind. For centuries, books have been the centerpieces—the gems, if you will—of libraries the world over. In more recent years, the technology we acquire and make use of in libraries has become a source of pride for our communities, and sometimes gets more "play" than the print resources we so painstakingly collect and maintain. Teens, especially, make use of technology such as downloadable books, blogs, and live chat reference, making it imperative that libraries stay current on this front. YALSA believes in the importance of embracing technology in order to stay viable for our teen patrons. In fact, the next issue of *YALS* will focus on teens and technology in recognition of YALSA's first Teen Tech Week, to be held annually during the second week of March beginning in 2007.

For now, however, we're getting back to basics. This issue focuses on the timeless, and I would contend necessary, service of providing reading material to teens. Most librarians will still tell you that a great sense of job satisfaction comes when, for instance, a teen gives positive feedback about a book that was recommended. I distinctly recall watching one of my former teen advisory board member's confidence grow over time after I introduced him to Alex Sanchez's *Rainbow Boys*. I knew he was struggling with his sexual identity and, as a result, he was unsure of himself, often acted out, and had trouble with depression. I don't pretend to believe that one book changed his life, but I do think it helped him a little. Jami Jones covers the basic tenets of bibliotherapy in her article in this issue, and Jennifer Burek Pierce traces the practice of reader's advisory back to its early days in her historical overview. You'll be brought back to the present with an interesting look at street lit, a genre that's finding a huge audience with urban youth, and a variety of articles dealing with reader's advisory and collection development issues, including how best to build a nonfiction collection for teens and how to conduct a reader's advisory interview by proxy.

Technology is important, no doubt. But it seems that despite numerous predictions that print will soon be superseded by digital formats, books are here to stay. And I, for one, am glad. As always, I hope you find the information in this issue useful, and that you'll use it to get "back to basics." Happy reading! YALS

from the President

Judy Nelson

Hi, I'm Judy Nelson, your new YALSA president. Thank you for allowing me to serve you; I am honored. I'm also excited to be serving *this* year because the Midwinter Meeting is coming to Seattle for the first time, and YALSA is turning fifty in 2007 and we intend to celebrate!

When the division was formed in June 1957, the organization was small in number and basic in services. The Young Adult Services Division, as it was then known, created booklists, offered program ideas and services, and shared knowledge and concerns among its members. If you received this issue of *YALS*, you're one of more than 5,100 members of the fastest-growing and fifth-largest division in ALA! We've changed a lot, but we are also much like we were fifty years ago. We're no longer small and the volume of activities has increased. Now we create virtual booklists, communicate through blogs, take online courses, and will be selecting the best audiobook annually. However, we're still a division that focuses on librarians working with and for teens and literacy. We're "still reading after all these years," which happens to be the theme for my presidential year and of this issue of *YALS*.

YALSA presidents are each asked to come up with a theme—how they will focus their presidential efforts and work on immediate issues that affect the division and YALSA members' work. By the second week of my tenure, I was dealing with two very different issues that went right to the heart of who we are and what we do, namely reader's advisory. Both issues dealt with the fact that we promote and advocate reading in all its forms and formats. Fifty years of experience and growth haven't changed our basic message; teens should read for fun and we are the experts in evaluating, selecting, and recommending materials for those teens.

So, what were the two issues? The first was providing a quote for the press release announcing the new Odyssey Award, the joint ALSC/YALSA award for the best audiobook for children and teens. The second issue involved responding to an essay published in a national newspaper about "inappropriate" books in the teen section of a chain bookstore. The essay was generated by a parent who was horrified when, after leafing through one of the books in the Gossip Girls series—a series she had been encouraging her twelve-year-old to read—she discovered that the series didn't reflect her family's values.

What do these two issues have to do with each other and my presidential theme? Both lead back to some of the most important things we do as youth librarians. We evaluate, select, and recommend books, audiobooks, and DVDs for teens, and then encourage everyone to use our work to help teens make appropriate or acceptable choices. Reader's advisory is an indefinable concept that encompasses the librarian-customer interaction in which we determine what the reader wants and try to provide it. We create lists to help those who want to find things on their own. We train other staff and teens on how to ask the "right" questions, and we read, listen, and view widely in order to know what's available. The Odyssey Award joins our three awards and seven selection lists and will enable us to share the best of the amazing array of audiobooks out there. And the response to the newspaper essay will remind parents, caregivers, educators, and teens that we can always be counted on to help find what they want without relying on for-profit entities for suggestions. We are available in person, online, and through many venues including local library Web sites, through YALSA's Web site, in booklists we create, and awards we give out.

As you read this issue of *YALS*, think about how *you* conduct reader's advisory, then head to the computer and share your thoughts on one of YALSA's discussion lists or the blog. We may be coming up on our fiftieth anniversary, but we're "still reading after all these years." YALS

feature
professional perspectives

YALSA's Advocacy Task Force

By Rollie Welch

Service to young adults has always run a full spectrum from library to library, and from region to region across the country. On the positive side, some libraries have their entire staff on board and committed to providing quality service to teens throughout the building or system. On the other hand, some libraries provide the bare minimum of service. Most libraries fall somewhere in the middle. Areas of service to teens can include a separate young adult collection, a separate area dedicated to teens, or a budget that allows unique and creative programming designed to attract teens to the library.

In the interest of leveling the playing field (while also raising the bar) of services to young adults, YALSA has stepped forward to provide a national leadership role. In fall 2005, YALSA created the YA Advocacy Task Force to advocate for library services to teens. The task force's function statement is as follows: "To help plan and carry out YALSA's upcoming @ your library® campaign, which will be launched in 2007, and in conjunction with the national campaign to educate and inform the general public about the vital role libraries and librarians play in youth development and teen literacy, and to provide YALSA members and library staff with tools and resources to do the same in their communities."

The unique nature of serving teens immediately created a key problem upon which almost all advocacy for young adult service hinges. Simply stated, what groups should be targeted as potential advocates for teen services? Young adult librarians? Parents? Teens themselves? Perhaps the task force should target library administrators who may not have a knowledge of the importance or intricate problems of serving teens. Another option would be to make a broad blanket statement that may be directed to all of these groups.

Working Points of the Task Force

Realizing the charge is one that is simultaneously important and very involved, the task force met for the first time at the 2006 Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio, and began hashing out ideas. Members of the task force worked on setting goals and priorities, assigning jobs to individual task force members or teams of members, and visualizing a timeline:

- The targeted audiences will include teens, educators, parents, publishers, politicians, librarians (generalists), and the general public.
- A survey will be formed to solicit ideas and suggestions from librarians to see what spaces, staffing, and budget they currently have for teens in their libraries.
- The task force formed the goals of creating talking points, a logo or banner, and a toolkit for use by librarians.
- To incorporate teen participation, the task force wishes to acquire teen input for a logo or banner design, which could possibly be promoted through a contest. A suggestion arose of having teens offer their own ideas on how to get in touch with their peers—they're the ones who know.
- The task force would like to promote the advocacy message by providing electronic banners to Hot Topic and record label sites that are magnets for teen online browsing. The banners and links could also be used on libraries' Web pages for teens and on teens' personal Web pages, teen magazines, authors' Web sites, publishers' Web sites, and the Teen Read Week Committee's teen page.

Gathering Testimonies from Professionals in the Field

The task force realized the impracticality of having only a handful of people deciding the direction of its work. Thus, to generate talking points, a request for anecdotal information about the value of teen service in libraries was broadcast to several library-related discussion lists, including YALSA-BK, YA-YAAC, PUB-YAC, and PUBLIB. What follows are several excerpts of the responses related to

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the necessity and importance of different aspects of teen services.

Talking Point 1: YA/Teen Librarians

Teens need trained professionals to assist them in finding materials for school projects and personal needs, and to suggest reading material appropriate to age and reading level. Children, adults, and even seniors have specialists. Why shouldn't teens?

> *I used to booktalk constantly; about twenty-five times per year at high school and middle schools. About five years ago, I got a nice letter from a former student in one of those classes. She enjoyed my booktalking so much that she had become a YA librarian! What a huge compliment! I kept that letter and treasure it beyond belief. Booktalking is so much work that it's hard to justify to administration, but it pays off in unbelievable ways. Now I'm a library director, but I think one of the most valuable things I do is to continue to strongly support youth services by hiring talented librarians and letting them do their thing! Booktalking is a top priority on my list because* it works.

Talking Point 2: Acceptance and Understanding

Many teens find acceptance and understanding with teen librarians that they find nowhere else. How is this important when dealing with teen patrons?

> *A boy in my first group of Dungeons and Dragons players (back in the '80s, when it was hot and I averaged fifty kids per meeting) was the first kid in his family to graduate from high school, ever. I know he graduated and turned into the fine young man he became in an otherwise dysfunctional environment because he had a place to belong.*
>
> *A young man came to the library as a middle-school student. Bigger than many kids, he was a bully type at some of our programs and sometimes hard to handle. He also navigated to Web sites that were inappropriate and we had to keep an eye on him. But the staff stuck by him and treated him with respect despite how he acted at times. By high school he was hired to work as a page and recently, as a college student, he has been hired part-time to work on the computers with our tech guy. I feel that his success is in part due to the intervention and caring of our youth services staff.*

Talking Point 3: Effects of Nontraditional Programming

Teens see the library as a community-centered place to serve all ages. Are there any nontraditional programs that have been successful?

> *We had a Skateboard Expo at our library twice because the first time it was such a big hit. We blocked off the street for the kids that day so they could skateboard and do their jumps. It was on the front page of our local newspaper with a great picture of a kid jumping high into the air on his skateboard. They don't have a place to skate so we hosted one!*

Talking Point 4: Traditional Teen Programming Still Has a Place

Teens are still interested in traditional library programming, especially if the prizes are nontraditional. Programs don't necessarily have to be for pure entertainment; the library's collection and services can be showcased through a teen program.

> *Drawing on my own experience and hours and hours of research, I developed "Show Me the Money," a program on how to search and apply for scholarships, bursaries, and loans to fund post-secondary education. When I first offered this program, our registration list filled up within a day and I ended up offering multiple sessions of the program in order to*

What Can I Do Right Now?

- Be an advocate for teens in your library. No action is too insignificant when dealing with teen patrons.
- Ask teens what programming and materials they'd like to see in the library.
- Set up a teen advisory board or council.
- Encourage teens to participate in planning, promoting, and hosting programs.
- Educate staff about teens.
- Celebrate Teen Read Week to involve your library in a national movement to recognize teen patrons. The theme for this year's Teen Read Week, October 15–21, 2006, is Get Active @ your library.® Drawing teens into reading and the library with nontraditional programs that include sports and volunteer activities for causes that they care about will yield rewards not only now, but for the rest of their lives.

accommodate the interest. When I offered the program again, the same thing happened, and multiple sessions were required. Every time I offer this seminar, I provide attendees (parents and students) with feedback forms, and the comments received have been overwhelmingly positive. For example, "A wonderful orientation to the process of searching out post-secondary funding" and "An extremely useful presentation that addressed my questions and made the process seem less daunting. It is so great that the library is offering this!"

This past summer my library featured an iPod Mini as the grand prize for the teen summer reading program. The number of books read was 150 percent higher than the previous year. The raffle winner hadn't been a library user since his early elementary school days, but he was determined to win the iPod and read 115 books over seven weeks.

Talking Point 5: Teens Connect with Technology

Teens make up the patron group that is most comfortable with the explosion of technology in our world. Should the library embrace this teen "expertise?"

The library is often a place where teens who do not have computers in their homes are able to gain access to the Internet. Many libraries have run successful programs for teens that focus on building Web pages, online gaming, Internet safety, and a host of other Web-related topics.

I think video games should be in every library. I am twenty-eight years old and have grown up with a game controller implanted in my hand. I consider playing video games the "read your own adventure" of my generation and those that follow. They are exciting, scary, romantic, mysterious, and sometimes very thought provoking. Just like books, only I control the main character, and my feet are in their shoes. I pushed really hard for this at my library, and the circulation is fantastic. I can't even begin to describe the delight on the faces of the teens when they discover the collection, which is sandwiched nicely between graphic novels and fiction. The teens now associate the library with a cool place.

Conclusion

Simply stated, libraries need teens. The concept of building lifelong learners, readers, and library patrons will not be accomplished if there is a break in the bridge from one age group to the next. If a library stubbornly sticks to the inflexible model of the traditional library of seventy-five years ago, teens may very well feel alienated by that atmosphere. An important thought to consider is that teens are our future patrons. When the seniors and adults are gone, who will patronize our libraries? In fact, one out of every four patrons who walks through library doors is a teen. According to Patrick Jones's *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries,* teenagers make up 23 percent of the total public library patronage in a typical week.[1] Therefore, alienating teenagers would result in a loss of one-fourth of the library's customers. The old chestnut is often verbalized: teens are future voters and deciders of library funding. A more proactive way to approach this situation, however, is to recognize that teens have worth and importance during their teen years and are just as important now as when they reach voting age. YALS

Members of the Young Adult Advocacy Task Force are Chair Ma'lis Wendt, Barbara Blosveren, Jennifer Dewsnap, Debbie S. Fisher, Ryan Gessner, Rollie Welch, and Kelley Worman. Charli Osborne is the former chair and collected the testimonies used in this article.

Reference

1. Patrick Jones, *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual,* second edition (New York: Neal-Schuman, 1998).

Defending Intellectual Freedom

By Barb Conkin

The American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom defines intellectual freedom as "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction."[1] As attempts are made to block this freedom, most recently in the interest of security, understanding the fundamentals of intellectual freedom becomes increasingly important. As teen advocates, we battle for our own rights while protecting the rights of young adults. YALSA's Intellectual Freedom (IF) committee exists to support and maintain the First Amendment rights of our teens. It fulfills this goal through four main functions. The first two provide assistance to YALSA in their efforts to improve YA librarianship, while the other two directly benefit young adult librarians.

The first function of YALSA's IF committee is "to serve as a liaison between YALSA and the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and all other groups within the Association concerned with intellectual freedom."[2] The chair of YALSA's IF committee sits on ALA's Freedom to Read Foundation (FTRF) and subscribes to its discussion list to stay aware of and provide support during current censorship battles. FTRF provides financial and informational help with litigation. The second function of the committee is "to advise YALSA on matters pertaining to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the ALA Library Bill of Rights and their implications to library service to young adults and to make recommendations to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee for changes in policy on issues involving library service to young adults."[3] The cooperation of all of these groups within ALA makes each of them stronger.

The next two functions of the committee are intended to directly help young adult librarians with intellectual freedom issues. The third function is "to prepare and gather materials which will advise the young adult librarian of available services and support for resisting local pressure and community action designed to impair the rights of young adult users."[4] To this end, the committee maintains a page in the professional development section of the YALSA Web site that contains an abundance of resources to help young adult librarians deal with challenges, as well as primary sources to build strength for their cases. In honor of YALSA's fiftieth anniversary, this Web site will be updated as part of a special effort to make it more user friendly.

The fourth and final function of the IF committee is "to assume responsibility for the continuing education of young adult librarians regarding intellectual freedom."[5] This ties into the updated competencies for young adult librarians passed by the New Directions Task Force, which address intellectual freedom in Areas V and VI. Programs at ALA conferences are one of the ways the committee achieves this educational goal. For instance, the committee hosted a program at the 2006 ALA Annual Conference called "Out of the Closet and Into the Library: Access to GLBTQ Materials for Teens," and is cosponsoring a program about teens and the First Amendment hosted by ALA's Intellectual Freedom committee at Annual Conference in 2007. The Web page maintained by YALSA's IF committee also contains vast amounts of educational resources. YALS

BARB CONKIN is Assistant Community Library Manager and Children's Librarian for the Briarwood Community Library of Queens Library in New York. She is the former chair of the YALSA Intellectual Freedom Committee.

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1. American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom, "Basics," 2006, www.ala.org/oif/basics (accessed July 12, 2006).
2. American Library Association, Young Adult Library Services Association, "Intellectual Freedom Committee Description," 2006, www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/aboutyalsab/intellectual.htm (accessed July 12, 2006).

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

Additional Resources

ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee
www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifgroups/ifcommittee/intellectual.htm

ALA Freedom to Read Foundation
www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/othergroups/ftrf/freedomreadfoundation.htm

YALSA Intellectual Freedom Committee—Professional Development
www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/professsionaldev/intellectual.htm

Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth
www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/professsionaldev/youngadultsdeserve.htm

Teens' Recommendations for Reluctant Readers

By Jessica Mize

Librarian: "What are some books you liked reading?"
Teen: "I don't like to read."

How many librarians for teens have been confronted with that exchange? In my six years as a librarian for teens, I have pulled out my hair and racked my brain searching for just the right book for an apathetic or unaware reader whose parent is standing by, threatening their teen, "You will choose something!"

Librarians have many handy tools to entice reluctant readers. YALSA's own list, Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, provides myriad titles and topics to hook even the most doubtful teen reader. The recent release *Connecting with Reluctant Teen Readers* by Patrick Jones, Maureen L. Hartman, and Patricia Taylor (Neal-Schuman, 2006) shows librarians and teachers how to entice reluctant readers by including lists for specific readers with specific interests. YALSA's other lists—such as Best Books for Young Adults, Popular Paperbacks, and Great Graphic Novels for Teens—can assist a reader's advisor in throwing out titles to a not-so-anxious reader, but what better tool to use than other teens' recommendations? We all have our favorite "you will love this book," suggestions, but what would teens recommend to each other?

During the Get Wild @ your library® summer reading program at the Newark (Ohio) Public Library, the teen services staff informally asked teen readers, " What books are on your must-read list?" Here are ten of the teens' responses and comments:

Dessen, Sarah. ***Just Listen.*** Viking Children's Books, 2006; ISBN 0670061050; $17.99. It has humor, romance, and serious issues that girls actually face!

Fish, Pauline. ***The Red Judge.*** Bloomsbury, 2005; ISBN 1582349428; $16.95. Mythology worked into an intense read.

Giles, Gail. ***Shattering Glass.*** Roaring Book Press, 2002; ISBN 0761315810; $17.95. This book feels like a suspenseful movie.

Horowitz, Anthony. **Alex Rider** series. Philomel Books. Teenage boy turns spy and saves the world! Can't wait to see this one on film.

Hunter, Erin. **Warrior** series. HarperCollins. A kitten named Rusty travels into the forest for the adventure of his life!

Myers, Stephanie. ***Twilight.*** Little, Brown Children's Books, 2005; ISBN 0316160172; $17.99. Long but oh so good! Vampires and true love—who wouldn't love that?

Pelzer, David. ***A Child Called It.*** Health Communications, Inc., 1995; ISBN 1558743669; $11.95. The fact that this book is based on a true story makes it even more horrific.

Sachar, Louis. ***Holes.*** Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998; ISBN 0374332657; $17.00. We are all cursed in some way. It's what we choose to do about it that matters!

Shan, Darren. **Cirque du Freak** series. Little, Brown and Company. The biggest series to hit Newark. We love it so much we made a board game.

Sleator, William. ***The Duplicate.*** Penguin Group, 1999; ISBN 0141304316; $5.99. Who wouldn't duplicate themselves if given the chance? YALS

JESSICA MIZE is Head of Teen Services at the Newark (Ohio) Public Library. She currently serves on the 2007 Printz Award Committee and the Teen Buckeye Book Award Committee. She previously served on YALSA's Board of Directors.

A Real Princess

An Interview with Meg Cabot

By Paula Brehm-Heeger

Author Meg Cabot is known for her funny, spunky, and genuinely likeable characters. She has an amazing ability to create stories, relationships, and dialogue that capture what it is *really* like to be a teen. Mia Thermopolis, narrator of *The Princess Diaries*, may be her most famous heroine, but there is no shortage of strong and independent young women in Cabot's many books. From Samantha Madison in *All-American Girl*, who stands up for what she believes in even when it puts her at odds with the president of the United States, to Steph Landry in *How To Be Popular*, who makes a difficult choice between disappointing her grandfather or committing social suicide, Cabot's characters face their many challenges with courage and a definite sense of humor. *The Princess Diaries* may feature a bright pink cover, but don't be fooled. As the author herself says, "look past the tiara" and discover the many sides of Meg Cabot.

BREHM-HEEGER: You once worked as an assistant manager at a New York University dorm. What was that job like and how did it affect your writing career?

CABOT: Basically I sat in an office and the kids would come downstairs when they were upset about something. That was the only time you ever saw them, when they needed to complain. The primary thing office staff did was counsel people with eating disorders, but we handled a lot of roommate conflicts, too. I was the administrative assistant so I worked on setting up the meetings. I supervised the student workers and was in charge of hiring them and making them go to work. It was a great job because it's so much fun to work with students. There was a lot of time when nothing was going on, and I would use that time to write. My bosses were fine with that. My book *Size 12 Is Not Fat* is based on my experience at that job. It's about a girl who is an assistant manager of a dorm but she solves crimes. I never actually solved a crime, though. I used to fantasize there would be a murder and I could solve it.

BREHM-HEEGER: During that time, did you ever think you might not make it as a writer? If so, what kept you going?

CABOT: Oh yes. Every single day. I got that job thinking I would go back to college to study art therapy, but I kept putting it off. Then my dad died. When that happened my husband said, "Look, you write all these books. Why don't you try to get them published?" I thought if I got rejected I would be so depressed that I wouldn't want to write anymore. But my husband pointed out that my dad had just died and that's about the worst thing that could happen. Getting rejected maybe isn't that big a deal. Turns out he was right. I started sending out letters trying to get an agent. Every day for two years I got a rejection letter. There is a point where you think, am I wasting my time? But you have to ask yourself, what am I hurting? It's not hurting anything to be trying to do this. I love to write. My husband was really supportive and he always asked, "Are you going to quit just because you don't get published?" He would say, "I love to play golf. I'm not going to quit just because I'm not Tiger Woods." That really meant a lot to me.

Some of the rejection letters I got were kind of nice. Most were just "no," but a few would say they thought I had talent, my stuff just wasn't right for them. That kept me going, too. I have a gigantic U.S. mailbag filled with rejection letters. I used to take it around to schools and say, "Look at this if you want to be a writer." Then I would very dramatically dump out the bag so kids could read all the letters.

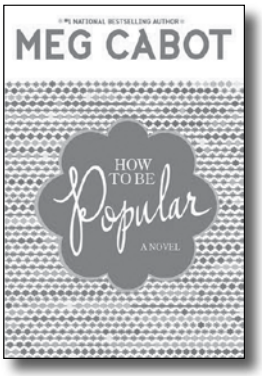
BREHM-HEEGER: You cite George Lucas as your greatest influence in becoming a writer because after seeing *Star Wars* as an eleven-year-old, you realized you could actually make money by making

PAULA BREHM-HEEGER is current Vice President/President-Elect of YALSA. News of her meeting and interviewing *the* Meg Cabot caused several members of her teen advisory board at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio) to jump up and down with excitement, commenting "nu-uh" and "that is so cool."

stuff up. Many of your female characters are big sci-fi fans, too. Are you still a sci-fi fan? If so, what is your favorite sci-fi movie? Book?

CABOT: I was a sci-fi fan when I was the age of my characters. I had a real problem finding books when I was growing up that had feisty, funny, female heroines. A lot of the books for teens at that time tended to be message books about "don't have sex before you get married" or "don't get anorexia." I wanted my reading to be about being entertained, not preached to, so I turned to sci-fi and fantasy. That's where I found heroines that I could relate to and liked. I turned to romance when I saw *Romancing the Stone*. That was a *huge* influence. *Star Wars* was my first influence and then came *Romancing the Stone*. I was like, "You can write books and get paid for it and the books can be about crazy pirates and stuff?" You know that scene where Kathleen Turner's character finishes her book and she has a little bottle of liquor, like from an airplane? For some reason that was my dream. Also, at the end when her editor's reading the book and crying—which so never happens in the world of publishing. You are never sitting in the office while the editor is reading. But I thought that would be awesome. I used to write reams of fan fiction. I was super into *Star Wars* fan fiction and wrote huge volumes of *Jedi Knight Academy School*. I still have it and actually thought about getting it typed up, but then George Lucas came out with the prequels and I was very disappointed. I thought mine were much better. I was a huge, huge fan of John Christopher, too. I was very into *The Prince in Waiting*.

BREHM-HEEGER: In your latest book, *How To Be Popular*, the narrator is in love with a guy with whom she doesn't realize she is actually in love. This is a common situation in many of your books. As a teenager, did you have a guy "friend" like that? If so, what became of the situation?



CABOT: I had guy friends and they all turned out to be gay. It was the painful, "Yes, I love you, I'm sorry, but I'm gay" conversation, at least with one or two of them. The only one that I really hung onto for a long time and did not realize that I was in love with was my husband. I met him when I was sixteen. We were friends for years and it wasn't until I was about twenty-four that one day I looked at him and was like, "Oh my God, I'm in love with this guy!" At the time, I thought it was so terrible because he was my friend and I didn't want to screw up the friendship. It was the whole *When Harry Met Sally* thing. But it ended up okay. We're still married.

BREHM-HEEGER: You have a real celebrity status with teen girls. Do you ever hear from teen guys?

CABOT: I hear from a lot of teen guys. They are all kind of sheepish when they write. They say things like, "You don't know this, but I am a boy and I love your books. I have to take the cover off because it's pink and I don't want my friends to see that." When *Avalon High* came out, originally the cover was pink. That was okay for the Princess books but, you know, there are guy readers out there, and this is the kind of book I can see a guy liking. So they changed the cover to purple with just the crown on the cover, which was better. Some of the guys I hear from have come out and said they are gay. I have one very loyal transgender fan who writes to me, thanking me for "showing me how to be a girl." I'm honored because that is very sweet. The thing I get the most mail about from boys, seriously, is *The Princess Diaries*. I think some of them are reading it to find out about girls. That's pretty clever.


Photo by Ali Smith.

BREHM-HEEGER: You grew up in Bloomington, Indiana, a Midwestern college town. What were some of your favorite things to do or places to hang out as a teen?

CABOT: Obviously, the library. It was air-conditioned and there was stuff to do. They had a huge collection of sci-fi, and I read everything they had. They weren't snobby about letting kids come up to the adult section, either. You could go wherever you wanted and check out as many books as you wanted. All my friends were academic kids and our parents taught at the university so reading was something we all did. When we weren't reading we were making up stories. The public pool was the other place we'd go. You had to work on your tan.

BREHM-HEEGER: Is there any library experience that stands out in your memory?

CABOT: I remember one time being at the library as a teen, researching a book I

was writing. It was a very Indiana Jones-type book about World War II, with Nazis and stuff, and I was determined to get it finished. But I had bronchitis and was coughing really hard and crying—I was such a geek. The librarian was like, "You need to go home. Really, it's time."

BREHM-HEEGER: Your father was a professor. What was he a professor of?

CABOT: Quantitative business analysis, which is basically computers before computers got to be like they are now. You know WOPR from *War Games*? That's kind of what he had in his office. We would go there as kids and get those little computer cards and computer paper to draw on. The primary source of paper in our home was the WOPR.

BREHM-HEEGER: Did you like growing up on a university campus?

CABOT: The university was the best thing about Bloomington because it was liberal and there was always something freaky going on. The students were great. They were always having protests so you were really conscious of stuff that, in a town without a university, you maybe wouldn't know about. But because we were all professors' kids, when we would go to school, we would be with the kids whose parents were not involved in the university. They didn't see the stuff that was going on around campus, so we would get into fights. It was kind of random, but kind of good because it prepared us for life.

BREHM-HEEGER: On your Web site [www.MegCabot.com], you mention Sarah Vowell as one of your favorite authors, along with David Sedaris and Dave Barry. Clearly you're a fan of humorous books, and humor plays a big role in many of your books. Do you consider yourself a naturally humorous person?

CABOT: In my house if you weren't funny, no one paid attention to you. We were a house of little stand-up comedians in training. It's weird because I have an adopted brother who was not funny. I mean, he was funny, but not in the same way we were funny. I think your sense of humor is a genetic trait you inherit. At the dinner table, we would do a little riff on what we had done during the day and you had to make people laugh. It was good training for my books.

BREHM-HEEGER: You recently announced that you will be working with HarperCollins to produce a new line of manga. What sort of titles will be included?

CABOT: I'm doing six books. The first three are going to be sequels to *Avalon High*. It's going to be continuing and you have to read all three to get the whole story. It's a lot of going back and forth because it's kind of new and I'm working with manga people who have their whole agenda. I don't really understand it and they don't really understand authors. It's a learning experience. It's fun, though. The books are going to be available next summer. I've read some manga but I don't consider myself an expert by any means. I have an online message board book club and I've been looking to see what the kids have been talking about. They know all of the artists and the different terms, so I'm getting an education through the teens.

BREHM-HEEGER: You wrote on your blog about an experience you had as a teenager where a friend claimed one of your drawings as her own. What advice would you give to a young person who is tempted to claim someone else's words or art as his or her own?

CABOT: You're just basically cheating yourself. You're missing out on the most important thing in creating something—that is that it comes from you, from your heart. If you're just parroting something that someone else did, that totally defeats the purpose. Maybe you'll get money for it, but you're not getting the most important thing. It goes back to what my husband asked me, "Would you keep writing even it you weren't getting paid?" Yeah, of course, because I love the feeling of finishing a project and knowing I did it.

BREHM-HEEGER: In *How To Be Popular*, the narrator finds a book giving very specific steps to take in order to become popular. How did you come up with the advice the book offers about popularity?

CABOT: I combed the Internet and read many books. Not just for popularity at school, but also in the corporate workplace. It was surprising to me how similar it all was. *The Art of War* has some great tips, too. Some of it I made up. It was not easy. And, of course, I had to reword it so that *I* wasn't plagiarizing.

BREHM-HEEGER: Many of your characters are faced with a choice: they can either do the thing that may make them "cool" with their popular peers or they can do the right thing. What do you hope readers will take away from your characters' struggles in these situations?

CABOT: I found that in high school people were afraid to be different or to stand out in any way and I really want my characters to show that it's okay to be different. Yeah, maybe at that time in your life you're going to get made fun of or you won't be popular. But down the line you're going to be happier because you did what you wanted to do. In my experience doing something that's a little bit off the beaten path has always paid off. Now I'm profiting from my crappy teenage years. You never

know what can happen. You can make money being weird.

BREHM-HEEGER: *How To Be Popular* features a side story about a romance between grandparents. How do you make a romance between characters' grandparents relatable and accessible to teens?

CABOT: The grandfather in the book is based on my own grandfather, who recently passed away. He and I had a very strange relationship because the only thing that we had in common was that we talked about business and money. That was a relationship I had with him that nobody else had. I also wanted to do the romance because of my mom. She's a grandmother now and she's having this hot and heavy romance with one of my former teachers. I used that relationship in *The Princess Diaries*. That was why I started writing the original book, because I was upset about my mom and my teacher. Now I thought I should say, "You know what? It's actually very cute. You guys are adorable."

BREHM-HEEGER: Do you have a favorite band or singer at the moment?

CABOT: I change constantly and, sadly, I'm really, really into pop. Whatever is popular, I like. It's good music to write to because it's loud and you don't need to listen to it too hard. I was just listening to Shakira back in my room while doing my manga. Also a little Pink, Fall Out Boy, and KT Tunstall. I'm sure whoever is popular when this article comes out, I'll be listening to that person, too, because that's what I do. Oh, and Kelly Clarkson. It's all about Kelly. She's awesome.

BREHM-HEEGER: Gwen Stefani is a big favorite of Sam Madison in *All-American Girl*. Are you a fan of Gwen, too?

CABOT: I used to be. But then her new album came out and people were asking her, "Are you a feminist?" and she said no. What? Hello! You're the head of this massive corporation, how can you say that? Is it because of this perception that if you're a feminist, you don't wear makeup and you're not feminine? Feminism is about equality and making the same money as the guys who are also putting out albums. It really kind of made me mad. That gives girls this stupid stereotype that being a feminist means you burn your bra and that people have to perceive you as ugly. But I'll still listen to her.

BREHM-HEEGER: What's the most Mia-like thing you've ever done?

CABOT: Oh my gosh. Well, the embarrassing things, don't you instantly try to, like, forget them? Mia is so autobiographical. Everything that happened to her, except the princess stuff, really did happen to me. Seeing my teacher in his underwear the first time certainly stands out as one of the most embarrassing moments. I am also a baby like her. She has the problem where she can't let her brother alone; she's constantly worrying about him. I'm that way about my cat. You know, Mia wrote this three-page, single-spaced "how to take care of my cat" letter and it's completely taken from me. My cat sitter read the book and was like, "Do you realize that is the exact letter you left for me?" It's a good thing I don't have children. They would never be allowed to go out or do anything.

BREHM-HEEGER: How would you sell your latest book, *How To Be Popular*, to a teen?

CABOT: The thing I keep saying is there is so much peer pressure to be popular. So many girls think that it's the most important thing. What my character discovers is that the most important thing is having good friends. Not that she doesn't get popular—[I] don't want to give anything away. But one of the ways you get popular is by being yourself, embracing the things that you love, and making other people enthusiastic about those things, too. YALS

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feature
best practices

Reader's Advisory by Proxy

Connecting Teens and Books through Positive Interactions with Parents and Caregivers

By Heather Booth

Some reader's advisory requests strike fear in the heart of even the most stalwart young adult librarian: "*Holes* is the only book I've ever read and I want something *exactly like it*." Or, "I need a book for a report that deals with a historical event between 1890 and 1912, and it needs to have pictures, but it has to be short because the report is due tomorrow." Or, "I want to read a book like *Speak*, but funny." As long as the request is coming from the young patron who hopes to read the book, you can usually find something that will match the patron's needs by carefully conducting a reader's advisory interview and by using all of the resources for matching teens and books that you have at your disposal. For many librarians though, the most difficult book requests come not from teen readers, but from their parents, teachers, or adult friends: "I need a book for my son. Where are your books for high school freshmen?" Or, "My daughter doesn't read, but I want a book that will get her to like reading." Or, "He only reads junk. Can you recommend some quality literature?" On the surface, these requests seem simple enough. Plenty of books are interesting and readable for fourteen-year-old boys, are excellent for reluctant readers, or are literary greats. So what's the problem?

Helping parents select books for their teens, or reader's advisory by proxy, is an endeavor fraught with unique issues. Does the parent know what books the teen has already read, and—more importantly—enjoyed? Are you expected to find books that primarily meet the parent's approval or the teen's interest? Will the parent be willing to take a selection of books back to the teen, or is the one book you select going to be the teen's only reading choice? When helping parents find books for their teens, librarians' standard operating procedures for reader's advisory go awry because it is often unclear who the patron really is. Is it the parent who is looking for the material, or is it a teen whose reading interests are unfamiliar to you?

When parents come to the library seeking books for their teens, even if they have very little information on which to base a recommendation, and even if they have a very firm idea of what their teen *should* read, we need to remember that it is a good thing that the parent is actively attempting to seek out reading material for their child. Parents are allies in connecting teens with books, and reader's advisory by proxy should be approached as a bridge-building activity, not a chore. Many teenagers are astoundingly busy, and sometimes the only way for a young person to have a connection to books is for parents to bring them into the house. When parents insist on a specific type of book—a classic, or something with which they are familiar—they are not *necessarily* trying to censor or control their child's reading material. It is quite possible that what they seek is a shared reading experience. A book that both parent and child have read can be a way for parents to connect to their quickly and drastically changing adolescent. It is equally possible that some parents aren't even aware that librarians can and do

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provide reading suggestions, and simply ask for titles familiar to them because they don't know where to find suggestions. Assure these parents that you are glad to help get some great books into the hands of their teens, that you are glad they are involved in making books readily available to their children, and that you are happy to provide suggestions for whatever type of reading their teens would like.

This is not to say that the interaction will always be an easy one. Parents aren't always aware of their teens' reading interests. For example, a parent may know that his teen used to like reading high fantasy, but may be unaware that she has been on a manga kick for the past three months. Additionally, even if the parent is up on his child's reading interests, it is a rare parent who can remember which books that teen has read or which he didn't care for. Even if the teen has relayed information about the type of books to bring home, librarians still must play a delicate game of telephone. Maybe the teen read *Jurassic Park* and told his mom he didn't like the dinosaur aspect, but since the teen is not around, you don't know if books with dragons or man-eating alligators would be suitable. After you determine as best you can what the teen would like to read based on the parent's comments, you are still challenged by not knowing the teen's reaction to the books. Unlike working directly with a teen at the library, who can page through the books you select, choose or reject titles, and allow you to make a few more suggestions, you rarely get a second round during a single visit from a parent selecting books.

So what is the remedy for these issues? Begin by getting to the root of the request through solid reference interview techniques. Determine if the request is intended to fill an assignment, is a teen's request, or stems from the parent's interest in finding a book for the teen. This should help to direct the focus of the suggestions. To receive an indication of what type of material may work best, try asking if the parent recalls the last book the teen read and whether or not the teen commented on the book. Inquiring about the types of movies or television shows the teen enjoys could also indicate which genres may be more appealing. If the parent doesn't remember or doesn't know, ask if the teen is accessible by phone. If the teen is at home or available to take a call on a cell phone, a few quick questions may help to ensure that the teen will be open to reading the books you send home. You need not operate in an isolated bubble if the information you need to provide excellent service, instead of adequate service, is readily available. Additionally, this demonstrates to the teen that you are sincerely interested in selecting books that he or she *wants* to read, and that the selection of books that winds up at home isn't the result of a great librarian-parent conspiracy!

Consider devising more creative methods of conveying information to your teen patrons who are just too busy to come in. But even if an overbooked schedule isn't the primary reason why parents are at the library instead of teens, extending some of these services will help to convey to teens that the library is a place that is welcoming and interested in serving them. Sending prepared booklists to go along with the books, offering a departmental e-mail address for follow-up and further suggestions, or even providing information about your library's Web site, online catalog, or virtual reference services are ways to make the library accessible to teens. If it is clear that the parent is really the one seeking the information, assure him or her that you truly do want to know how the teen likes the books you have suggested, and that during the next visit to the library, you would like the chance to suggest a few more titles, whether the teen liked the books or not. Feedback on recommendations by proxy can help you hone your skills at finding books appropriate for the intended reader.

The reality of modern teen life means that many of our reader's advisory interactions for teens will actually take place through their parents. If we are prepared for the slightly different mechanisms by which we must conduct the reader's advisory interview in these circumstances, and strive to extend our services beyond the face-to-face interactions we ultimately desire, the teens in our communities will know that the library is *their* library, too. YALS

Street Lit

Flying Off Teen Fiction Bookshelves in Philadelphia Public Libraries

By Vanessa J. Morris, Sandra Hughes-Hassell, Denise E. Agosto, and Darren T. Cottman

Street lit" novels (also called "urban fiction," "hip novels," "black pulp fiction," "ghetto lit," and "gangsta lit") have captured the interest of a sizeable portion of an underserved young adult population: the urban African American teenager. Traditionally considered reluctant readers, many inner-city teens are now reading because of street lit. These novels tell stories that reflect many of the harsh realities of inner-city life, such as sex, drugs, violence, and fear for one's physical safety. The target audience for street lit is typically African Americans within the twenty to forty-four age range, although teens and preteens are avid readers as well. For the most part, the readership is working class and lives in urban settings similar to those depicted in the books. This article traces the cultural origins of this emerging genre, defines it in detail, and explores why inner-city teenagers at one branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia are passionate about reading it.

The Culture of Hip-Hop and the Origins of Street Lit

Hip-hop, the cultural progenitor of street lit, is "a youth subculture, originating amongst the Black and Hispanic populations of New York City, which comprises elements such as rap music, graffiti art, and breakdancing, as well as distinctive codes of dress."[1] From fashion brand names like Roca Wear and Sean John, to airbrush art on clothing, nails, and skin, hip-hop has influenced many aspects of modern American culture. Adults and young adults alike are emulating hip-hop celebrities with tattoos and piercings, and speaking the language of street slang and Spanglish. Hip-hop has emerged as a viable influence in many areas of popular culture, not just in the United States, but across the globe. According to Eric Hellweg, hip-hop "is to America's global cultural heritage what jazz was eighty years ago."[2]

Hip-hop's contribution to literature is extensive. The beatnik café houses of the 1960s have seen a revival in the spoken-word poetry movement that has merged into the mainstream with such poet-musicians as Jill Scott and Jewel. A number of popular magazines focus on hip-hop culture, such as *Vibe* and *XXL*, and their readerships grow each year.

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During the past few years, hip-hop has also gained academic attention. Many universities have offered courses on hip-hop, and a number of noted academics have focused their attention on studying this American subculture. For example, Temple University has offered a special topic course in its African American Studies department called, "Hip Hop and Black Culture." Harvard University offered the course "Hip Hop America: Power, Politics and the Word" within its Afro-American Studies department. Many other higher education institutions, including Fordham University, Kent State University, and the University of Kansas, consistently offer classes studying hip-hop music, dance, and culture.

The University of Pennsylvania's cultural critic Michael Eric Dyson has published a canon of works on hip-hop culture. Informative and provocative, Dyson's works have been instrumental in bringing hip-hop culture into mainstream consciousness. In his 2002 work *Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur,* Dyson explores the slain rap/hip-hop icon's life and career within the context of hip-hop and African American culture.[3] Dyson also has published other titles discussing hip-hop, including *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* and *Open Mike: Reflections on Philosophy, Race, Sex, Culture and Religion*.[4] During fall semester 2005, Dyson taught two courses on hip-hop at the University of Pennsylvania: "Hip Hop Culture" in the African American Studies and Urban Studies departments, and "Religion and Secular Values: Hip Hop Culture" in the Religious Studies department. Other hip-hop cultural critics include Kevin Powell (*Keepin' It Real*), Bakari Kitwana (*The Hip Hop Generation*), George Nelson (*Hip Hop America)* and Yvonne Bynoe *(Stand and Deliver)*.[5]

Perhaps nowhere is the influence of hip-hop more apparent than in the literary genre referred to as street lit. In these novels, various aspects of hip-hop culture are presented and explored by characters living in "da 'hood" (inner-city settings) who are "keepin' it real" (asserting the reality of the challenges of living in the inner city).

Defining Street Lit

A Brief History

To reach back to the source of street lit, we have to look to personal narratives such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1966) and Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965), classic titles in African American literature about the harsh urban lifestyles of African American men growing up in the ghettos of Detroit and Harlem, respectively. Such titles began the street lit movement by describing raw, gritty realities on big city streets.

In the 1970s, Iceberg Slim and Donald Goines set the tone for urban fiction by publishing novels prolifically, and gaining large followings. These two authors gave definition to urban fiction as a subgenre of African American literature with their realistic depictions of ghetto life in Detroit and Chicago.[6] Both men also brought credibility to their writing because, like many of their successors in the genre, they themselves were involved with drugs and served jail time for various crimes.[7]

Slim appeared on the scene first with his personal narrative, *Pimp: The Story of My Life* (1967). Many of his titles—which include *Mama Black Widow* (1969), *Long White Con* (1971), and *Airtight Willie and Me* (1979)—are still in print and circulating in urban libraries today. His books have sold more than six million copies to date.[8]

While Slim is considered the first of the early street lit authors, Goines became the most prolific, publishing sixteen titles within his five-year writing career. Inspired by Slim's *Pimp*, Goines wrote *Dopefiend: The Story of a Black Junkie* (1971) while serving time in prison. Although Goines grew up in a stable home in Detroit, when he returned to the United States after serving in Vietnam, he came home a heroin addict. He then committed a flurry of crimes and was in and out of jail for more than six years, during which time he launched his literary career, focusing on the theme of ghetto violence. In 1974, he and his wife were gunned down at home (with their children locked in the basement), the possible result of a botched drug deal.[9] Goines remains popular today; his titles have never gone out of print in thirty-five years, have sold more than five million copies, and are frequently requested in urban libraries across the nation.[10]

The Reemergence of Street Lit

Street lit reemerged with the publication of Omar Tyree's *Flyy Girl* (1996). Originally published by a small press in 1993, it was picked up by Simon & Schuster and reissued with relative sales success three years later. However, not until the publication of hip-hop artist turned author Sister Souljah's *The Coldest Winter Ever* (1999) did a street lit title see blockbuster success. Often referred to as the "godmother" of street lit, Souljah's bestseller led to a marked increased in the popularity of the genre.[11]

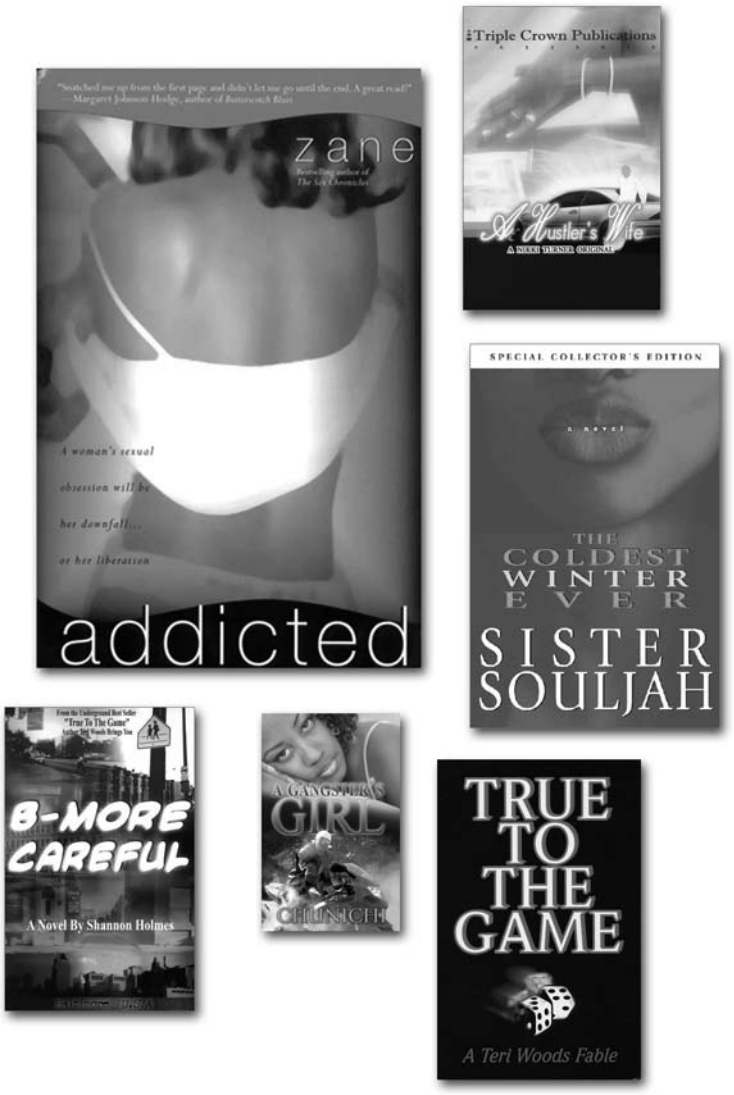
Since the late 1990s, more than one hundred street lit titles have been published, and at least three publishing companies have been formed for this genre: Urban Books, Strebor Books International, and Triple Crown Productions. Souljah has been joined by a host of other African American writers, including Teri Woods, Zane, Solomon Jones, Shannon Holmes, Carl Weber, and Vicki Stringer.

Most of today's street lit authors are in their twenties and thirties. Many come from the cities and neighborhoods featured in their books and employ real neighborhoods and actual street names in

their writing. For example, Woods, Tyree, Jones, and Daaimah S. Poole (*Yo Yo Love*, 2003) set their tales in their native North Philadelphia. Richmond, Virginia, native Nikki Turner placed her novel, *A Hustler's Wife* (2003), in her hometown; Baltimore native Holmes did the same for her popular title, *B-More Careful* (2001).

As was the case with Slim and Goines, some modern street lit authors are ex-convicts and recovering drug addicts who began writing while in prison and rehab centers. This personal experience with the life and culture they describe adds realism to their gritty, raw stories.

One noted exception to this pattern is black erotica author Zane, who is perhaps the most popular, provocative, and prolific fiction writer in the genre, whose novels have taken urban readers by storm. A mother of three from Baltimore, with neither a known criminal record nor history of drug use, Zane writes raw, gutsy, sexually graphic urbanized black fiction that appears again and again on the African American bestseller lists. As CEO of the urban fiction publishing house Strebor Books International, Zane is a higher quality writer than many of the other urban fiction authors, with better developed characters, writing, and editing.[12]



Common Characteristics of Street Lit

Settings

Street lit stories are usually set in the ghettos of major U.S. cities such as New York (Harlem and Brooklyn, specifically), Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. All of the action typically occurs in one city or in one neighborhood. As in real life in the ghetto, street lit characters rarely leave the 'hood. However, occasionally street lit novels—like *The Coldest Winter Ever, Flyy Girl,* and Black Artemis's *Explicit Content* (2004)—include scenes in the hip-hop music industry or on college campuses. Brand names, song titles, and neighborhoods are painstakingly detailed to bring a sense of realism to the books, as authors attempt to recreate the real-life environments shared by their readers.

Characters

Although written by adults for adults, these stories typically have young adult protagonists that are between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three. The characters usually age from young adulthood to adulthood as the stories progress, or the authors use flashbacks to reveal significant moments in the protagonists' childhoods.

Major characters tend to occur in threes: three women, as in Holmes's *Bad Girlz* (2003) and T. N. Baker's *Sheisty* (2004); three men, as in K'wan's *Road Dawgz* (2003); or a mixture of men and women, as in La Jill Hunt's *Drama Queen*

(2003). The undying love of a "thug" (a male drug dealer) taking care of his "ghetto fabulous queen" (the female consort of a male drug dealer) is also a popular theme, as in Woods's *True to the Game* (1994), *A Hustler's Wife*, and Jones's *Ride or Die* (2004).

Female characters are typically young adult African American or Latino women in some type of turmoil, usually because they are in love with the wrong kind of man. Although most come from very harsh childhoods and want to get out of the 'hood, like Epiphany in *Sheisty*, a few grow up very privileged and want to get *into* the 'hood, like Ceazia in Chunichi's *A Gangster's Girl* (2004) and Keisha in *Ride or Die*. The male characters generally are African American young adults who are drug dealers or physically abusive womanizers; often they are in jail or just getting out of jail. Many engage in criminal behavior during the course of the novels.

Plot Characteristics

Hip-hop fiction typically deals with daily life in the ghetto, featuring young female protagonists coming of age with dramatic complications to consider, such as drug dealing, drug trafficking, graphic domestic violence, and sexual encounters. The male protagonists usually stand at some kind of turning point in their lives, often struggling to become successful drug dealers or to leave the world of drugs behind.

The action is always fast-paced and the final resolution comes quickly. For example, in Jones's *Ride or Die*, the entire novel covers the events of one day. We see the protagonists, Keisha and Jamal, involved in a murder mystery on the lam from the Philadelphia police. In and out of disguise, the couple races through various sections of the city, seeking refuge and an opportunity to consummate their love. Supporting characterizations are explored to add a whodunit tone to this fast-paced urban tale. Everything is resolved by the end of the novel, which is also the end of a very long, action-packed day.

A hook to the plot usually occurs within the first chapter of the book—usually something shockingly violent such as a brutal murder or extreme physical violence toward a female. For example, within the first ten pages of Holmes's *Bad Girlz*, teenage protagonist Tonya gets high on angel dust, is raped by her stepfather, is severely beaten by her mother, gets thrown out of her mother's house, and is forced to live on the street. By the end of the first chapter in KaShamba Williams's *Driven* (2005), readers witness the graphic birth of the protagonist to his seventeen-year-old mother, Loretta, as she is verbally abused by the baby's father.

At first glance, the conflict in most street lit appears to be person-against-person or person-against-society. However, in many of the novels, the internal conflict of the characters compels the reader the most. For example, in Baker's *Sheisty*, Epiphany's desire is to get out of "da 'hood." Epiphany tries to create that reality for herself, only to be pulled by the lure of the streets and her libido.

Themes

The authors of hip-hop literature confront subjects such as violence (particularly against women), death, premarital sex, pregnancy, teen parenthood, abortion, crime, drugs, and incarceration. These subjects attract teen readers partly because of their taboo status, but also because they are topics faced by many teenagers growing up in inner cities.

Drug culture is often glamorized in these novels, with characters achieving prestige in the neighborhood, as well as financial reward, from their drug activities. Men often use money and status to manipulate women into participating in the drug trade. Women, on the other hand, frequently use their sexuality to attract the attention of young drug lords in order to gain the prestige that comes by association.

Many street lit novels can be classified as modern cautionary tales, the distant ancestors of didactic folk tales. By the end of the novel, the protagonist realizes the error of her ways and decides to go from self-centered hedonist to responsible citizen. For example, Tracy in *Flyy Girl* decides to attend college to become a teacher, and Tender in *Bad Girlz* leaves the stripping business to become a hairdresser. The authors of many of the novels either include introductions or epilogues in which they explain that the intent of their writing is to show young readers the dangers of life on the street. For example, Holmes writes a five-page prologue in *Never Go Home Again* (2004) relating his life to events in the novel. In the paperback edition of Jones's *Pipe Dream* (2001), an interview with the author is provided as an afterword. In this interview, Jones shares the harsh reality of his experience with crack addiction and drug recovery. In the epilogue for Williams's *Blinded* (2003), the author offers reader's advisory about the morality of the tale.

This moralistic undertone, however, is not found in all hip-hop literature. There are novels in which the main protagonist continues to live "the life" or plans to return to it after completing a jail term. In *Sheisty*, K. C. comes out of jail, returns to a life of crime, and is physically and verbally abusive to his "wifey," Shana. In *True to the Game*, the reader is left wondering what Gena will do with the drug money she has—return to "the game" or become a productive citizen.

Writing Styles

Street lit is usually written in the first person, with the protagonist telling the story. When there is more than one protagonist, alternating voices often nar-

rate the story. For example, in Roy Glenn's *M.O.B.* (2004), we meet Travis, Jackie, and Ronnie, three college-educated childhood friends who lose their jobs and turn to the streets to maintain their expensive lifestyles.

Street slang and hip-hop verbiage is used consistently throughout the genre, making it seem like a foreign language if the reader is not familiar with the terms. Although profanity is prevalent, hip-hop lingo is a language all its own, full of words with unique meanings. For example, the titles *Wifebeater, Blinded, Grimey,* and *Sheisty* are code words in hip-hop language that stand for something entirely different than their English meanings. While the term "wifebeater" may denote domestic violence, in hip-hop lingo it is merely the description of a popular sleeveless undershirt worn by men in the ghetto. On the streets, "blinded" means to be deceived or betrayed. "Grimey" and "sheisty" mean to be dishonest and two-faced, to mislead someone.

By and large, the books tend to be poorly edited, with conventional misspellings and grammatical errors. Many of the titles started as vanity press publications and were later picked up by small presses, or, in a few cases, large publishing houses.

Exploring the Appeal of Street Lit: The Widener Teen Street Lit Book Club

Inner-city African American teenagers, particularly females, are devouring this genre as if it were the newest installment in the Harry Potter series. Although the bulk of the reading audience is female, some young males do read street lit: "While trade paperback street lit editions sell most to Black women and girls between the ages of 13 and 30, it [street lit] is also read by an even more elusive and desirable demographic group: young black men."[13] Street lit has become so popular that libraries in many neighborhoods in Philadelphia are having difficulty providing enough books to satisfy the demand. To understand why teens are reading this genre, a street lit book club was formed at the Widener Branch Library of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Widener is located in the heart of the Strawberry Mansion section of North Philadelphia, an inner-city neighborhood of predominately African American low- to lower-middle-income residents. The neighborhood fell victim to the drug wars of the 1980s and is still in recovery. Drugs continue to be sold on street corners, amid piles of garbage and unemployed recovering drug addicts. In the past few years, a rise of violence has taken hold in North Philadelphia, with children sometimes caught in the crossfire of drug disputes. The tales told in novels like *True to the Game,* Antoine "Inch" Thomas's *Flower's Bed* (2003), and Thomas Long's *A Thug's Life* (2004) are testimonies to this population's reality of life.

The Book Club

At the Widener Branch, a teen street lit book club was formed in March 2005 to address the need for teens to gain the skill of critical analysis so they could self-navigate through this genre with more wisdom and understanding. Outreach to area middle schools was performed to inform students of the book club, and to ask them for suggestions of which titles to order for the new urban fiction collection. Flyers were passed out among students and posted throughout the library. Teens were informed when the new collection of urban fiction was going to be unveiled, and were personally invited to this event. The event included pizza, soda, a booktalking program, and free discussion. This unveiling served as the kickoff for the Widener urban fiction collection, as well as the beginning of the Widener Teen Street Lit Book Club. Twenty-five teens attended the kickoff event.

Originally scheduled to run for four weeks, book club members enjoyed the program so much that they kept coming back for a total of sixteen weeks. When asked, "Why do you still want to have the book club?" fourteen-year-old Dashae explained that the book club was fun and "kept them off the streets with something positive to do."

An average of fifteen females and two males between the ages of twelve and seventeen took part each week. Many of the book club members had read virtually every title in the street lit genre prior to joining the club, and they already knew of forthcoming titles. They were also capable of booktalking the books, often giving suggestions to the teen librarian for collection development. Many of the teens purchased the books, passing them around among their friends. The teens indicated that their parents read the books as well.

Weekly discussions were held on topics that the club members selected themselves. Members wanted to talk about various themes commonly addressed within the genre, such as violence, hustling, rape, negative images of women, and negative images of the community.

Because of the popularity of this genre and the high nonreturn rate of the books, checkout standards for this new collection were based on a seven-day loan period and no more than three books at a time per patron. This arrangement allowed the collection to last for six to eight months with rotating titles available for checkout. As recently as September 2005, circulation statistics had risen sharply at Widener Branch Library. The branch manager attributes the increase in adult circulation statistics to the urban fiction collection.

The Results

Widener teens recognized three favorite street lit titles: *Flyy Girl, Coldest Winter Ever,* and *True to the Game*. They liked these titles because they could relate to the teen female protagonists. The group especially liked *Flyy Girl* protagonist Tracy Ellison because she is a teenage girl from the Germantown section of Philadelphia—an area of the city with which the teens can closely identify. The protagonist in *True to the Game*, Gena, is a teen girl from the same area as Widener Branch Library, inner-city North Philadelphia. The group revered *The Coldest Winter Ever* because of the completeness of the story. They especially appreciated that the protagonist, Winter, does not win in the end.

The major appeal of street lit novels seemed to be in their representation of street culture. According to book club participants, street lit novels accurately reflect the violence, fear, and desperation prevalent in their inner-city neighborhoods. For example, roughly 80 percent of the book club members admitted seeing someone shot during their lifetimes. One-hundred percent had witnessed a drug interaction of some kind. As LaShanna, fifteen, commented, these books are "about real life."

Most book club members also acknowledged that they know people who live the lifestyles depicted in these books. During a book club session with the adult/teen librarian at Widener Branch Library, seventeen-year-old Janeen was very clear about the fact that some people in her family are like the characters in the books. She especially identified with the female characters who were in love with drug lords and who spent a lot of money on expensive items, but still lived in a low-income neighborhood. Many book club members said that the characters in the books reminded them of the popular girls in their high schools.

Some of the most lively book discussions focused on self esteem, values, and images of the 'hood. There were many discussions about the need to establish criteria or standards for friendships and other personal relationships. There was also discussion about how the books show the African American community "in a bad light" (said Jasmine, thirteen). By talking about the various details in the genre, such as characters who lust for name-brand items yet still live in poor neighborhoods and men who make a lot of money, yet sell drugs and commit murder, club members began to question their previous acceptance of these negative behaviors.

The relationships between the male and female characters in the books also spurred much discussion. The girls, for the most part, originally thought that the male characters "were good to their women" because "they bought them name brand stuff." As they began to analyze the books, however, they began to understand that most of the relationships were dominated by verbal and domestic violence. Rape and physical abuse were common. For example, rape was a theme in ten of the fifteen books that the club discussed.

The two boys who participated in the club objected to the way the female characters are represented. For example, fifteen-year-old Robert talked about how a friend of his read him a couple of pages from Zane's erotic bestseller, *Addicted* (1998). He said, "I don't like girls like that, so I don't want to read about girls doing that kind of stuff."

The teens also confirmed that reading street lit "shows you what to be careful of," according to Jasmine. While reading the books validates these teens' reality, it also teaches them life lessons in a fast-paced, action-filled fashion. Sixteen-year-old Briana said the books "teach us to [not] do it." Fourteen-year-old Lynne explained, "they shine light on the things that [can] happen," validating the idea that street lit is a form of a cautionary tale.

By the conclusion of the book club, several modifications in the members' behaviors became apparent. During the early weeks of the club, the librarian who facilitated the meetings had to stand outside the library to encourage the girls to attend the meetings instead of remaining outside to flirt with young men. By the third week, members were coming in early, bringing their friends, and offering to go to the store to purchase snacks. More importantly, the teens began to request alternatives to street lit fiction—books that still accurately reflected their lives but lacked the hard, gritty details apparent in most street literature. They began to read and discuss more mainstream young adult urban titles such as Elizabeth Griffin Gore's *Niara* (2000), Daaimah S. Poole's *Got a Man* (2003), and Stephanie Perry Moore's *Staying Pure* (2000), an entry in a teen Christian fiction series.

Additionally, they became familiar with authors who are responding to the need for less sexually graphic, violent, and morally derisive novels for the urban African American teen. Jackie Hardrick has begun an urban teen fiction series with two installments thus far: *Imani in Young Love and Deception* (2002) and *Imani in Never Say Goodbye* (2004). Popular urban fiction author KaShamba Williams has initiated a teen-friendly urban fiction series called the Platinum Teen Series. During a library program at the Overbrook Branch Park Library in Philadelphia in June 2005, Williams stated that the intention of the Platinum Teen Series is to appeal to urban youth between the ages of eleven and fifteen. Williams's publication company, Precioustymes Entertainment, has published two titles thus far, *Dymond in the Rough* (2005) and *The Ab-solute Truth* (2005). Williams plans to publish twelve volumes in the series.

Sharon Flake is another popular African American young adult author whose books *The Skin I'm In* (1998), *Money Hungry* (2001), *Begging for Change* (2003), *Who Am I without Him?* (2004), and her latest, *Bang* (2005), have been

recognized by YALSA. Her books have realistic, urban settings, with urban teen protagonists going through challenges growing up in an inner-city environment. Flake hails from the Strawberry Mansion/Allegheny West section of North Philadelphia and currently resides in Pittsburgh.

Scholastic Books publishes Jeanne Betancourt's Three Girls in the City series, which provides a multicultural slant on the urban teen fiction genre. Featuring three teen girls from different backgrounds who are best friends growing up in New York City, this four-volume series is not as gritty as other urban teen fiction titles, but is suitable for younger preteens. For a more extensive list of recommended young adult novels featuring urban settings, see *The ALAN Review*'s "The Urban Experience in Recent Young Adult Novels."[14]

Conclusion: Street Lit and the Urban Public Library

The success of the Widener Teen Street Lit Book Club indicates that street lit deserves thoughtful consideration by librarians who serve African American young adults in urban areas. Although for the most part street lit is a body of fiction that needs some editorial cleanup, this genre does include some quality titles that have stood the test of time, such as *Coldest Winter Ever, Flyy Girl,* and *Yo Yo Love.* Even though the stories offer little hope for a better life, they soothe the frightened and confused souls of anxious African American teens seeking confirmation and validation of their lives, as well as legitimization of inner-city culture.

From a librarian's point of view, the value of this genre is that it motivates urban teens to read and to discuss books with their peers. The new Widener Branch urban fiction collection has led more patrons to check out books, and it has led to an increase in patrons' requesting materials by author and title. Through urban fiction, many local teens have become empowered to use the library because they have found a genre that includes characters who look like them, talk like them, and live in neighborhoods similar to their own. Street lit has thus reignited the vitality of the urban neighborhood library.

By reading street lit fiction, African American teens are coming together in the name of hip-hop—literarily. We must be ready to answer their call by reading this genre ourselves, by understanding the culture it represents, and by discussing it in YA literature courses, as it is only through thoughtful exploration that librarians can be empowered to make the best reader's advisory and collection decisions for their communities. YALS

Editor's note: All names of Widener Teen Street Lit Book Club members were changed for this article.

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A Closer Look at Bibliotherapy

By Jami L. Jones

What is bibliotherapy? Is it giving a person struggling with depression a self-help book? Is it teaching problem-solving skills to a third-grader by working through a book together? Is it when a nurse uses a book to help a diabetic child come to terms with the disease? In each case the answer is a resounding "yes." Literature on the topic of bibliotherapy—whether quantitative research studies using control groups, anecdotal accounts, or statements about the efficacy and power of books—points to one conclusion: books can and do make a difference.

The definitions of bibliotherapy range from the simplest—"helping with books"—to a more complex one described by Katz and Watt as "the guided use of reading, always with a therapeutic outcome in mind."[1] The ancient Greeks recognized the power of books as therapeutic tools by inscribing these words above the door at the library of Thebes: "The medicine chest of the soul." It is not the definition of bibliotherapy that is perplexing, but rather the worry that the principle of "giving the right patron the right book at the right time" could turn into a troika of wrongs—the wrong patron, the wrong book, and the wrong time.[2]

Over time, mental health specialists and librarians—and to a smaller degree, nurses and educators—have kept the practice of bibliotherapy alive albeit on the periphery of their professions. While many mental health professionals consider bibliotherapy lacking compared to other more tried-and-true treatments, librarians shy away from anything that suggests therapy. Even though most librarians wholeheartedly believe that books can heal, there is confusion about their role in this process. Principally, librarians worry about overstepping their bounds. They worry that a book suggested by them could heap additional distress on a patron who is already suffering.

Bibliotherapy Has a History

The term bibliotherapy was first coined in 1916 by Unitarian minister Samuel Crothers, who wrote in *The Atlantic Monthly* about a technique of bringing troubled persons together with books.[3] By the early 1920s, Sadie Peterson Delaney, chief librarian of the United States Veterans Administration Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama, was using books to treat the psychological and physical needs of African American war veterans. The first step in bibliotherapy, which Delaney defined as "the treatment of a patient through selected reading" was to know the patient through case histories as well as books.[4]

Working as a team of social workers and psychiatrists, their purpose was to "enable patients to connect—or reconnect—themselves with a broad community of ideas."[5] Delaney's holistic practice of bibliotherapy transcended typical literary events such as book groups and story hours to include hobby clubs and activities such as stamp and coin collecting and debating to awaken a patient's mind. Delaney's techniques created such a buzz that she received worldwide recognition. Between 1924 and 1958, Delaney spoke at major conferences and held lectures in conjunction with psychology courses, and actively trained other librarians in the practice of bibliotherapy.[6]

In 1937, Dr. William C. Menninger, a founder of the Menninger Clinic, a prestigious group psychiatry practice, edited a book about psychiatry that included several of his papers. In one of these papers he described the purposes of bibliotherapy, how it fit into a patient's treatment plan, and how it was to be prescribed. At the Menninger Clinic, bibliotherapy was used to treat mental illness but only after the patient's background, symptoms, and therapeutic needs had been evaluated. Because bibliotherapy was considered a treatment, the physician was responsible for the "contents of the library and must approve the books before they [were] purchased," and for prescribing reading assignments.[7] The librarian's responsibilities included "the mechanics of purchasing and maintaining and distributing the books," as well as having personal knowledge of the book

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and interviewing patients about their reading.[8] Wolpow and Askov believe that Menninger's writings brought about the "polemic confusion as to what constituted therapy in bibliotherapy. Was it the interaction between the book and the reader? Was it the interaction among the book, the reader, and the person directing the reader? Or was it the interaction between bibliotherapy supervisor and the reader?"[9]

Caroline Shrodes furthered the study in her 1950 dissertation, when she postulated that there is a psychological basis to bibliotherapy. According to Shrodes, the reader "under the impact of imaginative literature, is subject to certain processes of adaptation or growth," which correspond to the major phases of psychotherapy: identification, projection, abreaction and catharsis, and insight.[10] First, identification and projection occur when the reader shares a problem, circumstance, or issue with the book's character. Second, abreaction and catharsis occur for the reader when the character resolves a problem, circumstance, or issue. Third, insight occurs when the reader reflects on his or her situation and internalizes the character's solution.

In the 1970s, Rhea Joyce Rubin added to the librarian's understanding of bibliotherapy by editing the classics *Bibliotherapy Sourcebook* and *Using Bibliotherapy: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. By this time, bibliotherapy had been categorized into several types. One type, the art of bibliotherapy, is similar to reader's advisory practiced by librarians. Other terms for this include implicit, developmental, and nonmedical bibliotherapy.[11] A second type, the science of bibliotherapy, is practiced by trained mental health professionals. Other terms for this type include explicit, clinical, diagnostic, or institutional.[12] In her books, Rubin answered the question first posed by Alice Bryan in 1939: "Can there be a science of bibliotherapy?" To be considered a science rather than an art, bibliotherapy needs a body of experimental data that proves its effectiveness. Rubin's intent was to present this scientific evidence to librarians and others.

Mental Health Specialists and Bibliotherapy

While librarians know that books are powerful, mental health specialists have conducted rigorous studies to prove bibliotherapy works. By using meta-analysis, a technique of synthesizing research results using various statistical methods, mental health specialists have determined that bibliotherapy is effective in certain circumstances. Pieter Cuijpers and Robert J. Gregory et al. performed meta-analysis to isolate the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in treating depression.[13] Mark Floyd used meta-analysis to gage the effectiveness of bibliotherapy to assuage geriatric depression.[14] Timothy R. Apodaca and William R. Miller conducted a meta-analysis to determine the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in treating alcohol problems.[15] In each of these meta-analyses, bibliotherapy was found to be an effective treatment in certain instances. First, it was found to be most effective with individuals whose mental health issues are minimal to moderate in severity. Second, bibliotherapy is most effective in combination with other treatments. Third, bibliotherapy is a viable option in rural areas where mental health treatment is not available or when therapy time is limited. For instance, in one study comparing treatments for panic attacks, bibliotherapy was more beneficial than minimal interventions such as phone contact with a therapist.[16] Fourth, bibliotherapy increases the patient's sense of responsibility. It works best with motivated individuals who are functioning at a higher cognitive level. However, Floyd cautions that bibliotherapy may be harmful if the client feels that the therapist is minimizing their problems by giving them a book.[17]

Dr. Cindy Crosscope Scott, a licensed counselor in North Carolina, utilizes fiction, fables, fairy tales, song lyrics, and self-help books in her practice. She often uses these materials with patients "out of session," as homework, to mull over and discuss at the next meeting because "sometimes books get through when nothing else does."[18] She cautions that because "we are a nation that wants to be fixed," some self-help books with a simplistic "follow these steps and you will be healed" approach can cause anxious patients to feel even more so.[19] Dr. Scott asks two questions when selecting self-help books: Is the author respected in the field? Does the author base self-help recommendations on empirical research?[20]

Other Bibliotherapy-Related Terms

Literatherapy: Refers to the direct and intentional use of literary text in conjunction with psychotherapy.

Bibliodiagnostics: When bibliotherapy's techniques are used for assessment.

Iblioprophylaxis: When bibliotherapy is used for prevention.

Videotherapy: The use of film or video for therapeutic purposes.

Librarians and Bibliotherapy

Librarians and other professionals, such as nurses and educators, have written many anecdotal articles describing how books can, and do, make a difference. Shirfra Baruchson-Arbib tells of an experiment in a school library in Israel in which a small

Some of Dr. Scott's Favorite Books for Bibliotherapy

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
Leo the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus
Dr. Seuss books

collection of supportive self-help, prose, and poetry books were made available to students in grades seven through nine for the purpose of stimulating discussion about relevant issues and problems facing the teens.[21] Baruchson-Arbib believes that the function of the school library in contemporary society needs to go beyond its traditional role to one that helps teens in three ways: to "absorb cultural values and knowledge," to become active members of the community, and to understand their problems.[22] She suggests that librarians adopt another name for bibliotherapy, such as "supportive knowledge," since the connotation of therapy dominates discussions about the helpfulness of books.[23]

Lenkowsky and Lenkowsky encourage the use of literature with learning disabled students who bring special problems and challenges to the classroom because of past histories of academic and social failure.[24] One student, Bonnie, a fifteen-year-old reading at a sixth-grade level, had very few friends and was concerned that she might never date. After it was discovered that Bonnie's reading interest revolved around sports, a high-interest, low-vocabulary book about a lonely girl who excelled at basketball was recommended to Bonnie. Her self confidence grew as she read this book, and then had more difficult ones read to her, about girls who overcame their social struggles.

Two nurses, Manworren and Woodring, write about the ways children's literature can be used to educate patients about illness, surgery, and hospitalization.[25] Their concerns about the developmental appropriateness and accuracy of literature are similar to librarians' concerns: how to evaluate popular literature for developmental appropriateness and content accuracy. Amer writes about how nurses used books to help children with short stature and diabetes discuss their feelings and cope with their challenges.[26] *The Littlest Leaguer* by Syd Hoff (Windmill, 1976) was used with short-stature children. Diabetic children benefited from *Sugar Isn't Everything* by Willo Davis Roberts (Atheneum, 1987) and *Tough Beans* by Betty Bates (Holiday House, 1988). Amer encourages nurses and parents to use books to help children discuss their ailments.[27]

Individuals and Bibliotherapy

Whether books are used clinically or developmentally, they are powerful. People who value reading usually have a story or two to share about how books helped them deal with a certain situation. After my son's girlfriend, Emily (her name has been changed), died suddenly, I thought long and hard about my responsibilities as a librarian working with teens, many of whom were in pain as a result of myriad family and personal problems not uncommon in today's society. As part of my grieving process, I turned to books that I thought could have helped Emily deal with her challenges if only I had known enough to recommend them to her. For example, I was drawn to *Solitary Blue* by Cynthia Voigt. I would have wanted Emily to recognize the similarities between her life and that of Jeff's, the main character. Several incidents from the book mirrored Emily's life in so many ways. In one scene, Jeff is stranded at the Charleston airport waiting for his chronically late mother, Melody, to arrive. In another scene Melody trades in Jeff's airplane ticket for a bus ticket because "there are better uses for the extra dollars" but neglects to give him any money for food even though the bus ride was sixteen hours long.[28] Jeff was able to protect himself by tapping into his inner strengths and welcoming the support of others. I would have wanted the same for Emily.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As a population, we are much more aware of mental health challenges and recognize the value of self-help efforts. Anytime a book is read by someone who needs its message to solve a problem or reflect on a challenge, bibliotherapy has occurred. Even recommending a book as part of reader's advisory may touch on bibliotherapy if the book is used to heal. Therefore, it is clear that librarians conduct reader's advisory and developmental bibliotherapy without hesitation. Concern kicks in when giving someone a book who has mental health issues morphs into therapy. There are roles for librarians in the art of developmental bibliotherapy, as well as clinical therapy. Perhaps one role for librarians in the science of bibliotherapy is to partner with mental health specialists to provide the names of books as well as specific passages that could be useful in therapy. In this way, librarians can be proactive and prove their usefulness to mental health specialists. On their own, it is of primary importance that librarians select quality books; self-help books must be well-written and credible. Secondly, perhaps a series of informational programs by mental health professionals with books and films tacked on could be developed. Finally, librarians should always be aware of community problems and issues discussed in the media because it is

likely patrons will request information on such topics. YALS

Additional Reading

Burgin, Robert, ed. ***Nonfiction Reader's Advisory.*** Libraries Unlimited, 2004; ISBN 159158115X; $39.95.

Doll, Beth, and Carol Doll. ***Bibliotherapy with Young People: Librarians and Mental Health Professionals Working Together.*** Libraries Unlimited, 1997; ISBN 1563084074; $25.00.

Hesley, John W., and Jan G. Hesley. ***Rent Two Films and Let's Talk in the Morning: Using Popular Movies in Psychotherapy.*** John Wiley & Sons, 2001; ISBN 0471416592; $47.50.

Joshua, Janice Maidman, and Donna DiMenna. ***Read Two Books and Let's Talk Next Week: Using Bibliotherapy in Clinical Practice.*** John Wiley & Sons, 2000; ISBN 0471375659; $49.95.

Stanley, Linda. ***Reading to Heal.*** Element, 1999; ISBN 1862043906; $21.95.

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2. Brian W. Sturm, "Reader's Advisory and Bibliotherapy: Helping or Healing?", *Journal of Educational Media and Library Sciences* 41, no. 2 (2003): 177.
3. Lauren Myracle, "Molding the Minds of the Young: The History of Bibliotherapy as Applied to Children and Adolescents," The ALAN Review 22, no. 2 (1995): 36–40.
4. Betty K. Gubert, "Sadie Peterson Delaney: Pioneer Bibliotherapist," *American Libraries* 24, no. 2 (1993): 127.
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6. Ibid., 125.
7. William. C. Menninger, *A Psychiatrist for a Troubled World: Selected Papers of William C. Menninger, M.D.* (New York: Viking Press, 1967): 316.
8. Ibid, 317.
9. Ray Wolpow and Eunice N. Askov, "Widened Frameworks and Practice: From Bibliotherapy to the Literacy of Testimony and Witness," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 44 (7): 606.
10. Rhea Joyce Rubin, Using Bibliotherapy: A Guide to Theory and Practice (Phoenix: Oryx Pr., 1978), 34.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Pieter Cuijpers, "Bibliotherapy in Unipolar Depression: A Meta-analysis," *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry* 28 no. 2 (1997): 139–47; Robert J. Gregory et al., "Cognitive Bibliotherapy for Depression: a Meta-analysis," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 35 no. 3 (2004): 275–80.
14. Mark Floyd, "Bibliotherapy as an Adjunct to Psychotherapy for Depression in Older Adults," *JCLP/In Session: Psychotherapy in Practice* 59, no. 2 (2003): 187–95.
15. Timothy R. Apodaca and William. R. Miller, "A Meta-analysis of the Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy for Alcohol Problems," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 59, no. 3 (2003): 289–304.
16. G. A. R. Febbraro, "An Investigation into the Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy and Minimal Contact Interventions in the Treatment of Panic Attacks," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 61, no 6 (2005): 763–79.
17. Floyd, "Bibliotheraphy as an Adjunct to Psychotherapy for Depression in Older Adults."
18. Personal interview with Dr. Cindy Scott, May 9, 2006.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Shifra Baruchson-Arbib, "Bibliotherapy in School Libraries: An Israeli Experiment," School Libraries Worldwide 6, no. 2 (2000): 102–10.
22. Ibid., 103.
23. Ibid., 105.
24. Barbara E. Lenkowsky and Ronald S. Lenkowsky, "Bibliotherapy for the LD Adolescent," *Academic Therapy* 14, no. 2 (1978): 179–85.
25. Renee CB Manworren and Barbara Woodring, "Evaluating Children's Literature as a Source for Patient Education," Pediatric Nursing 24, no. 6 (1998): 548–53.
26. Kim Amer, "Bibliotherapy: Using Fiction to Help Children in Two Populations Discuss Feelings," *Pediatric Nursing* 25, no. 3 (1999): 91–95.
27. Ibid.
28. Cynthia Voigt, *Solitary Blue* (New York: Scholastic, 1983), 44.

The Power of Information

Creating a YA Nonfiction Collection

By Karen M. Smith

Through an informal survey on the YALSA-BK electronic discussion list, I learned that many YA librarians have created nonfiction collections for teens. A number of these collections consist of popular, recreational titles, while homework help is most often filed with adult or juvenile nonfiction, largely due to lack of space. Creating a YA nonfiction collection is one of the most important aspects of a YA librarian's job because it helps meet teens' emotional, intellectual, and physical needs. Knowing what is popular, what is needed for school, and what useful reference materials are available can help you create your own YA nonfiction collection.

What's Popular?

In *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual* by Patrick Jones, Michele Gorman, and Tricia Suellentrop, the authors discuss subjects that are popular with teens, including urban legends, the unexplained, Web page building, cars, beauty, strength training, drawing, skateboarding, snowboarding, music, and survival tales.[1] Each of these subjects appeal to teens' passions, thirst for knowledge, and love of facts. Because what is popular with teens is ever-changing, it is important to pay attention to what teens in your community are reading in the library, checking out, and requesting. For example, books about video games, chess, and card games are popular in my library, but are not on Jones et al.'s list.

You know that specific titles are popular because you can't keep them on the shelves; the ones that are on the shelves look very "loved"; the reserve list is longer than your weekly grocery list; and a few of them are long overdue or missing. To supplement the perennially popular Chicken Soup series and, of course, David Pelzer's *A Child Called It*, here are some hot recreational nonfiction titles.

KAREN SMITH is Young Adult Librarian at the Allen Park Library in Michigan. During her seven years in the library world, she has run several successful library programs and helped to create one of the most extensive YA nonfiction collections in the area. She has been an ALA member for five years and a YALSA member for one.

Benton, Jim. ***It's Happy Bunny: Life. Get One.*** Scholastic, 2005; ISBN 0439693462; $7.99.

Flaherty, Mike. ***American Chopper: At Full Throttle.*** Meredith Books, 2004; ISBN 0696221659; $21.95.

Gottlieb, Andrew. ***In the Paint: Tattoos of the NBA and the Stories Behind Them.*** Hyperion, 2003; ISBN 0786888687; $16.95.

Guinness World Records 2006. Guinness World Records, Ltd, 2005; ISBN 1904994024; $27.95.

Hart, Christopher. ***Manga Mania: Chibi and Furry Characters: How to Draw the Adorable Mini-Characters and Cool Cat Girls of Japanese Comics.*** Watson-Guptill, 2006; ISBN 0823029778; $19.95.

Packard, Mary. ***Ripley's Believe It or Not!*** Scholastic, 2005; ISBN 0439718309; $14.99.

Perel, David. ***Bat Boy Lives! The Weekly World News Guide to Politics, Culture, Celebrities, Alien Abductions, and the Mutant Freaks that Shape our World.*** Sterling, 2005; ISBN 1402728239; $12.95.

Powell, Michael. ***Superhero Handbook.*** Sterling, 2005; ISBN 140272991X; $9.95.

Riley, Andy. ***Return of the Bunny Suicides.*** Penguin/Plume, 2005; ISBN 0452286239; $10.00.

Schlosser, Eric, and Charles Wilson. ***Chew On This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food.*** Houghton Mifflin, 2006; ISBN 0618710310; $16.00.

Homework Help

Some teens treat the library like their second home while others only set foot into a library because they need homework help. Consider this scenario:

A male student in the ninth grade comes into the library to find information about Colonial America. He needs to write a report that explains what life was like and the teacher has required at least two print resources. He is reluctant to ask for help because he wants to feel independent. After a search of the catalog he finds a few books in the adult section, many in the children's section, and none in the young adult section. He goes to the adult section only to find that the books are old, thick with small print, hard for him to read and comprehend, or organized in a way he does not understand. Next, he moves on to the children's section. There he finds books with large print, colorful pictures, and useful timelines. These books will help him somewhat, but they are not detailed enough and they look "babyish." He leaves the library empty-handed. Feeling very discouraged, he complains to his family, his teacher, and his friends about the lack of information in the public library.

The previous scenario could be happening in your library right now. Do you think this patron is likely to come back voluntarily? Librarians must make nonfiction collection development a top priority and arrange it so that it is easy for the teens to find the information they need. Now consider the same scenario going something like this:

After a catalog search on Colonial America, the ninth-grade boy finds a few books in the adult section, many in the children's section, and five in the young adult section. He goes to the YA section, finds the books easily on the shelf, and is pleased to find that one of them has short, easy chapters and another book contains primary documents. In the YA reference section he finds an entire encyclopedia on Colonial America with easy-to-copy articles. Next, he moves on to the children's section. There, he finds books with big print, colorful pictures, and useful timelines. These books will help him as supplements to what he's already found because they have pictures of clothing and houses and one even contains authentic recipes. He leaves the library with four books and photocopies of articles, feeling relieved that he found what he needed in a timely fashion and did not have to spend all day in the library. He then mentions to his family, his teacher, and his friends that the public library is "pretty cool" and that he got what he needed easily.

In the second scenario, the patron was able to find useful information in a reasonable amount of time without the help of an adult. He leaves the library with a sense of pride and accomplishment and most importantly, the information he needs to complete his assignment. What do you think the chances are that he will return the next time a paper is assigned? He may even come back for a program. It is likely that you have just helped to create a lifelong library user by simply having the materials he needed and making them easy to find.

For homework help, series nonfiction is the best option. All of the books are organized in the same manner, they are usually less than two hundred pages, and most are smaller than a regular nonfiction book, which makes them less intimidating to teens. Also, once you find the ones that are useful for your library, you can put them on standing order. Highly recommended series include Opposing Viewpoints, At Issue, and Literary Companion, all published by Greenhaven Press; Coping With . . . (Hazelden/Rosen Coping Skills Library) published by Rosen; and Just the Facts published by Reed Educational and Professional Publishing. Opposing Viewpoints, At Issue, Coping With . . ., and Just the Facts contain books that deal with specific social issues, such as tobacco and smoking, education, abortion, suicide, drugs and alcohol, and eating disorders. The Literary Companion series has books on specific literature titles—including *Hamlet, Beowulf,* and *Animal Farm*—that contain biographical information about the author, literary criticism, further research, and an index. These series can help a teen create an intelligent, well-researched paper.

Life Skills

Teens are going through a very emotional time. They are dealing with parents, friends, school, and oftentimes the opposite sex. Many teen girls want to have boyfriends, be popular, look and feel good, perform well in school, and learn about sex. Many teen boys want to hang out with their friends, find out how to do the most challenging skateboarding trick or master the latest video game, understand girls, perform well in school, and learn about sex. A complete and current nonfiction section can help them with all of these things. Excellent nonfiction titles that can help your teen patrons deal with their problems or concerns include:

Cooper, Evan. ***Um, Like . . . OM: A Girl Goddess's Guide to Yoga.*** Little, Brown and Company, 2005; ISBN 0316980013; $9.99.

Kirberger, Kimberly. ***No Body's Perfect: Stories by Teens about Body Image, Self-Acceptance, and the Search for Identity.*** Scholastic, 2003; ISBN 0439426383; $12.95.

Rabens, Susan. ***The Complete Idiot's Guide to Dating for Teens*** Macmillian, 2001; ISBN 0028639995; $12.95.

Walker, Tim. ***Sex 180: The Next Revolution*** Baker Books, 2005; ISBN 0801045290; $12.99.

Williams, Terri. ***Stay Strong: Simple Life Lessons for Teens*** Scholastic, 2001; ISBN 0439129729; $4.99.

It is important to have a fair and balanced YA nonfiction collection. For

example, it is great to have books that give kids detailed information about sex, but it is also important to have books that explain that abstinence is a perfectly acceptable option.

What Stays in the Library

Reference materials are a vital part of any YA nonfiction section. Because a library cannot purchase every book on every topic, it is important to have reference material that will be there for students whether they are the first to begin working on their project or the last. These materials should be in the YA section, separate from the other reference sections, and clearly marked. Some reference sources that you might consider are *Poetry for Students* and *Novels for Students,* both published by Gale Research Group and perfect for literature papers. New volumes are published twice a year and they give information about hundreds of poems and novels including author biographies, interpretations, literary criticisms, bibliographies and a "What Do I Read Next?" section. Another great resource is the *Encyclopedia of American History* published by Facts On File. This encyclopedia set provides a comprehensive look at American history and is organized by date and includes documents, a bibliography, and an index.

How Do I Choose Materials for a YA Nonfiction Collection?

Choosing nonfiction materials does not have to be a difficult task. Talk with teachers and students in your community and find out what topics are popular and what will be assigned throughout the year. Also, watch to see which topics circulate best. When buying biographies, select ones that are more than one hundred pages as some teachers make that a requirement.

Reviews can be very helpful in purchasing nonfiction titles. *Booklist* and *Voice of Youth Advocates* (*VOYA*) each review nonfiction titles and series nonfiction. Since 1996, *VOYA* has produced an annual Nonfiction Honor List that targets middle school students. Also, many publishers produce excellent nonfiction specifically for young adults that will be a welcome addition to any YA collection. These publishers include Gale Group, Facts On File, Lucent Books, Greenhaven Press, Enslow, Chelsea House, Lerner Publishing, and Dorling Kindersley.

Because it is helpful to take a look at a nonfiction book before you purchase it, take advantage of the opportunity to meet with book representatives and participate in the previewing of books. Both of these options allow you to see how the information is organized in a book and if the book will appeal to teens.

The Importance of a Separate YA Nonfiction Collection

Buying some YA nonfiction books and shelving them with the adult books will not be as useful as creating a separate space for the collection. While space is at a premium in most libraries, teens need their own space for books and a place to sit and read them. It is not very likely that teens who fear they have contracted a sexually transmitted disease will pull a book out of the adult section with a mother or grandmother in the same aisle. Besides, teens—like children and adults—deserve their own space.

Creating a young adult nonfiction collection is one of the most important things you can do in your library for your teen patrons. By taking the time to evaluate nonfiction books, creating a special space for them and listening to your teens, you will be helping these patrons to become healthy adults, able researchers, and lifelong library users. YALS

Reference

1. Patrick Jones, Michele Gorman, and Tricia Suellentrop, *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2004).

Books that Help, Books that Heal

Dealing with Controversy in YA Literature

By Joni Richards Bodart

From the very beginning, with S. E. Hinton's 1967 classic *The Outsiders*—the book that started the modern era of YA literature—books written for teens have been controversial, just as adolescence itself is controversial. Adolescence is a time of daring, trying, testing, and taking chances, and the talented, dedicated, and courageous authors who write for this age group know that their writing must reflect that. Young adult author and high school teacher Melissa Hart notes that teens today have "no tolerance for writing that patronizes or preaches. They crave stories with no holds barred and characters who are real, inspiring and flawed."[1] Teens also want stories and characters with whom they can identify, written from the perspective of a teen. Two of Hart's students had this to say about what they want to see in the books they read:

> I think a lot of adults forget that, though we are younger, it doesn't mean we aren't exposed to the same things an adult is. I know . . . people who have been raped . . . that are pregnant now, many on drugs, and more who are sexually active. Books for young adults should reflect this . . .
>
> I love the more edgy novels because they aren't afraid to . . . show you what is really going on and aren't afraid to say that it is a violent, cruel world, no matter how much we try to make it go away.[2]

YA literature—the books that are being written today for teens, that are designed to help them cope with the time and culture in which they are approaching adulthood—is frank, dark, presents issues that are difficult to read about, or even think about, and doesn't pull punches. It speaks to teens in their own language and talks about events and situations that are not always positive, comforting, or easy. It elicits an intense emotional response in readers, as they connect with the characters and the situations the story presents. It is literature that frequently makes adults uncomfortable, because so many of them want to protect teens from the darkest sides of this world, in which we all have to figure out how to live.

This brings us to the real reason why books for young adults have become so much more controversial. Teens want books that reflect reality without sugarcoating it—books that can help them find out what experiences, good and bad, are waiting for them and for their friends. They want a chance to experience reality vicariously before meeting it head on, and they know the safety of having those experiences through books. But today's reality is far more intense than the reality of previous generations. Teens are connected by cell phones, iPods, instant messaging, Web sites, and e-mail. They have access to more information, more quickly, than any other generation before. As Neil Postman first wrote in *The Disappearance of Childhood*, when children have access to information previously intended only for adults, childhood has disappeared.[3]

Today's teens know about violence, drugs, and sex—insidious, predatory forces they must be aware of both online and on the street. They know about death, divorce, conflict, and homelessness. They know about bullies, prejudice, rejection, and hatred. They know that survival can be difficult, and success isn't guaranteed to anyone, no matter your age or social class. Many of them know firsthand how

DR. JONI RICHARDS BODART, internationally known as a leading expert on booktalking, is a faculty member of the School of Library and Information Science at San Jose (Calif.) State University. Her most recent book is *Radical Reads: 101 Young Adult Novels on the Edge* (Scarecrow, 2002).

Checklist for Handling Challenges

- Create a library selection policy.
- Create a YA Department selection policy.
- Create reconsideration procedures. In other words, a detailed description of steps to take when challenges occur: who deals with the customer initially; to whom the customer is referred; explanation of policies; steps customer will need to take, starting with filling out the request for reconsideration form; and the library's response once the reconsideration form is submitted.
- Create a reconsideration form that includes questions about how the customer found out about the material; if the customer has read/viewed/listened to all of it; if the customer is making an individual complaint or representing an organization; if the customer has read articles or reviews of the material; what the customer wants the library to do about the material; and if the customer has suggestions about what material could replace the items to which they object.
- Train staff at all levels to handle customers with complaints, whether they are clerks or shelvers who simply refer the customer to a librarian, the librarian who actually talks to the customer, or the administrator who forms the reconsideration committee and has the responsibility for the final decision.
- Gather supporting evidence ahead of time for books that could be challenged, and keep up with challenges going on in other areas and how they are resolved.
- When confronted with a challenge, remember to stay calm; listen to the complaint carefully; explain policies and procedures; assure the customer that his or her complaint is valid and will be considered carefully; and be careful not to make promises outside the written policies and procedures.

Selected Titles that Could Be Challenged*

33 Snowfish, Adam Rapp
America, E. R. Frank
Boy Meets Boy, David Levithan
Candy, Kevin Brooks
Claiming Georgia Tate, Gigi Amanteau
Doing It, Melvin Burgess
Far from Xanadu, Julie Ann Peters
Feed, M. T. Anderson
Inexcusable, Chris Lynch
Looking for Alaska, John Green
Nailed, Patrick Jones
No Laughter Here, Rita Williams-Garcia
Nothing to Lose, Alex Flinn
Room on Lorelei Street, Mary Pearson
Rules of Survival, Nancy Werlin
Sandpiper, Ellen Wittlinger
Sledding Hill, Chris Crutcher
Target, Kathleen Johnson
Totally Joe, James Howe
Twilight, Stephanie Meyers

*From the upcoming book *Radical Reads 2: Working with the Newest Edgy Novels for Teens* (working title) by Joni Richards Bodart, to be published by Scarecrow in 2007.

much more controversial our society has become; it is their truth, their life. And they demand that this truth, this life, be reflected in the books they read. If YA literature doesn't reflect today's reality and look ahead to tomorrow, it will fall by the wayside. Quite simply, YA literature has become controversial, bleak, and dark because it mirrors the changes in our society and in our world. Since the best YA authors are using current events, beliefs, ideas, and realities as their inspiration, their work is as edgy, complex, and disturbing as the situations we each face daily. Once again, we have met the enemy, and it is us. Our society has begun to edge toward the extreme in a variety of ways, and as a result, so has the literature for those who are most willing, but least equipped, to take all kinds of risks.

Adolescence is a time when everything is black and white, and when emotions are intense, whether displayed or hidden away. YA authors know that they must hook their readers by inspiring those intense emotions through their work. Teens, unlike the adult readers they may become, have little patience with unrealistic characters or situations, conversations, or emotions. This is the reason why the best of YA literature is usually considered to be as well-written as some adult literature, and better than much of it. Teens are far more discriminating than adults, and will not hesitate to put down a book they label as fake, lame, or yesterday.

But here is the paradox: if controversial novels for teens were more poorly written, more banal, and didn't inspire such an intense emotional response in the reader, they would raise far fewer red flags. Skillful, well-crafted, thoughtful writing that respects the reader enough to depict reality accurately, including all the dark corners and subjects that some adults would prefer teens remain ignorant of, is much more likely to draw the censors' fire than platitudes of sweetness and light. But teens deserve well-written books that make them think, feel, wonder, and hope—that show them reality, no matter how uncomfortable it makes well-meaning adults who want to protect them from it.

Authors for young adults not only know how to engage their readers, they also respect them, recognizing in them a strength that other adults might not see.

They are parents, therapists, teachers, and librarians who understand and identify with teens, and their books speak in the authentic voices of teens. They know what it was like to be a teen "back then" when they were young, but they also know what it's like to be a teen today, including which things are different and which are not. They like teenagers, and they also respect them by not dumbing down their books or presenting pat answers to complicated questions and difficult situations.

Robert Cormier wrote a YA book without knowing it, by asking "What if . . . ?" about his son's high school chocolate sale in *The Chocolate War*. He knows the value of being truthful and real with his audience, of giving them the respect they deserve. When writing *I Am the Cheese*, he decided not to make Amy's phone number a 555 number, which kids would know was fake. He couldn't just make up a number, because he knew his readers would try calling it, so he decided to use his own number. For years, when the Cormier's phone rang and a teen asked for Amy, whoever had answered the phone would say, "She's not here right now. Would you like to talk to her father?" and the teen on the phone would be turned over to Cormier himself. He spent countless hours talking to his readers, giving them the attention and respect they deserved.

Cormier respected them in other ways, too, by not making his stories any less difficult or painful, whether he was writing about teen vandals and revenge in *We All Fall Down*; historical fiction about prejudice, honor, and heroism in *Heroes*; or looking at what the truth really means and how adults sometimes try to manipulate the truth and the teens who tell it in his final work, *The Rag and Bone Shop*. *The Chocolate War*, one of the very first YA novels to exhibit the gritty realism so important to teens today, ends with darkness and despair, as Jerry realizes he has to pay an enormous price for disturbing his universe. But when the book was made into a movie, the ending was changed to a more positive one, making a mockery of all that had preceded that new ending. Life *is* tragic sometimes, and horrible, unthinkable things can happen to good people. Teens know it, and trying to tell them differently means that they will reject the information and its source.

Authors also show respect for their readers by writing dialogue that reflects the way teens speak, including slang and obscenities. Teen soldiers, whether in Vietnam or Iraq, wouldn't say "shucks" or "dang," and any book that doesn't include what they really say will be rejected by its readers. Readers of Walter Dean Myers's *Fallen Angels* hear authenticity in the voices of its characters. Then, recognizing an author who dares to tell the truth, they go on to pick up his other books, among them, *Monster, Shooter,* and *Autobiography of My Dead Brother.* Myers is far from the only author who carefully considers which words to include or omit. David Lubar, author of *Dunk, Hidden Talents*, and *Sleeping Freshman Never Lie,* recently received an e-mail criticizing him for including the words "pissing him off . . . hell, damn, and bastard" in his books.[4] In response to one of the many supportive e-mails he received after reporting the incident to a discussion list, Lubar said, "I can't speak for other writers, but I know that I weigh the use of every single word in my books. (Not just the profane, but also the pronoun.) I gave a lot of thought to Martin's use of 'bastard' in *Hidden Talents*. It had to be a word with sufficient force for the situation."[5] Authors know that teens hear and use a wide variety of slang and vulgarities in their everyday lives. Omitting them would make their writing less believable, and less likely to be taken seriously.

YA authors know they have a great responsibility because teens read their stories and respond to them. They have to tell the truth; if they didn't, teens would know and refuse to read them. They know they must cut straight to the heart of the story. Characters and plot can be complex, but emotions must be clear. And not all of their stories end with a neatly tied bow, but instead end with dangling strings, so the reader can continue the story in his or her head. Besides, life itself doesn't always have pat or neatly tied endings—why should books?

So where do we go from here, as teachers and librarians who want to educate and inform teens rather than indoctrinating them? How do we persuade and inspire authors to keep producing difficult books, and how do we make sure they get into the hands of the teens who so desperately need them? First, we need to passionately fight the challenges these titles create, sharing our belief in their value and worth. We also need to make sure that teens know about the books, their controversies, and their insights. We need to educate our communities and our educators about the bibliotherapeutic possibilities of these books, whether read alone, in a classroom, or in a library book discussion group. We need to purchase these books for our collections, replace them when they are stolen, and promote them in displays, in booktalking presentations, and when doing reader's advisory work with teens. We need to point out to their detractors that these controversial titles teach lessons without being obvious or didactic, and sometimes even use humor or fantasy to get their messages across. Teens put themselves into these books, gain insight and understanding, reach out for help, and begin to recover. It is important to point teens who are ignored, marginalized, and neglected to books that can help them understand that they are not alone—that others have to deal with the kinds of difficult and horrific situations that they themselves are facing. Young adult advocates everywhere need to be doing all of this all of the time.

The first step in understanding and defending a controversial title is to read it, discover what emotions it elicits, and examine the power of its message. Look

at the lessons it teaches, the problems or situations it reveals, and the information it contains about how to resolve them. Next, it is necessary to recognize the emotional reaction both teen and adult readers would have to the book. If the reaction is negative, why is reading it an uncomfortable experience? What is unfamiliar is frequently uncomfortable, until one understands the purpose behind it. Therefore, rejecting something because it is unusual, unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or difficult to understand before investigating it further is like throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Some students come into my YA literature classes protesting passionately about being required to read these five titles: *The Outsiders, The Chocolate War, I Am the Cheese, Weetzie Bat,* and *Chinese Handcuffs*. (They have to read a total of fifty, but these five are required.) These books are at times unpleasant, uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and decidedly not easy to read. They contain ideas and concepts that students often don't like and are quick to reject. But after talking about them, comparing opinions with their classmates, and reading what the authors have to say about why they wrote them, their views begin to change. Understanding the value of books like these leads students, librarians, and teachers who once claimed to dislike YA literature to understand that it is not just dark and depressing. Therefore, encourage your colleagues and parents of teens to become familiar with some of the best of the YA canon. Be willing to talk about the titles they read, and explain why they are valuable. Talk to teens who read them, and collect their comments and opinions to share with adults. Urge adults to remember their own adolescence and also to recognize that today's teens live in a world that is much different. Just as the books adults read as teens reflected the time in which they grew up, today's controversial titles reflect the often dark and difficult time of today's teens.

The next step in defending controversial literature is to recognize that challenges will happen, and to prepare for them. Collect reviews, articles about the books or their authors, lists of awards they have won (and many of them do win awards), discussion guides written about them, and rationale for how and why they can be used in the classroom. Make sure you have a selection policy and a reconsideration procedure and involve teens in the latter if at all possible. While a general selection policy for the library is useful, a separate policy for the YA department may also be necessary. This policy should explain in some detail why material in this collection is purchased, including that which is controversial. Having procedures in place to handle complaints and challenges will mean that they are handled more smoothly and consistently. Staff who have been trained to deal with challenges will feel less stress when confronted, and will be able to deal more easily with a customer and a situation that can quickly become difficult. When a reconsideration committee needs to be formed, consider having one or two teens as members, along with library staff, community members, teachers (for a school setting), and local experts on YA literature. Teens can bring an important perspective to the committee's discussion and decision. If you do not currently have a selection policy and reconsideration procedure, many are available online.

It is also imperative to know who your supporters are and to make sure you forge strong connections with them. Possible sources of support are others who work with youth in the community; bookstore owners; political and religious leaders; newspaper, radio, and television contacts; parents; and other interested adults. They will be able to speak up for you when a challenge occurs, providing a perspective from outside of the library.

When a challenge occurs, follow procedure, trying to resolve it at the lowest possible level; when this is not possible, contact supporters and consult the American Library Association and others who have been challenged on the same title(s). While some challenges do go to court, recognize that most are resolved at a far lower level and that doing homework ahead of time increases your chances of being able to retain the title(s) in question.

Promoting controversial materials for teens may not be easy, but if even one teen is able to change her life by finding solutions to her problems, it is worth it. When Chris Crutcher tells the story of a girl who told him, "When I read *Chinese Handcuffs*, I thought you knew me," he says it was worth all the flak he'd received about the book.[6] Books—hard, dark, difficult books, can help. Books can heal. But only if teens know about them and know where to find them on library shelves. YALS

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Teen Book Discussions Go Online

By Cathy Rettberg

Social networking is the latest trend for teens. Some libraries are turning to this new means of communication in order to promote library services and to reach out to their young adult patrons with online book discussions. Dialogue can take place in several formats. Blogs and message boards allow readers to see each other's comments and to carry on an online conversation, while e-mail groups allow for interactions to take place between individual members or among the entire group. Both methods can accommodate teens' busy schedules, allowing convenient participation as little or as often as desired. Schools are getting in on the action as well, as school librarians encourage recreational reading by offering book discussion blogs. These tend to have more activity during the school year, and usually are limited to the school community.

With just a bit of planning, teen librarians can create easy-to-use online book groups while protecting the safety of their patrons. Most sites require free registration and include clear guidelines, with postings monitored for appropriate content. Discussion questions can make good conversation starters, steering the dialogue away from a simple "Did you like this book?" and on to more in-depth exchanges. Some message boards and blogs allow the added fun of avatars—custom images that allow users to project a personality. Links to book reviews or a local library's catalog can also add interest to a discussion site.

Networking sites such as MySpace (www.myspace.com) and Yahoo! Groups (http://groups.yahoo.com) offer opportunities for teens to join book clubs. By searching either of these sites, teens can locate clubs for particular books or authors, or general discussions of YA literature. Several online book discussion sites are profiled below. Check these out if you have teens who are looking for a new opportunity to talk about books, or if you are thinking about designing a site for your library.

Book Divas

www.bookdivas.com

Young adult and college-age readers can discuss books, read chapter excerpts, and interact with favorite authors at Book Divas. This busy message board offers discussions of some of the latest YA titles, bios of featured authors, and occasional live chat. Readers may participate in a specialty forum and discuss a particular book, or contribute to a book review message board. Users can upload avatars and create customized profiles. In order to protect user information, the Book Divas' privacy guidelines encourage parental guidance when young adults create a profile. With more than one thousand registered members and forty or more postings each day, the site has discussions to suit all interests.

Grouchy Café: Favorite Teenage Angst Books

www.grouchy.com/angst/favorites.html

This is one of the older teen reading message boards available, with postings going back to 2002. Participation seems to wax and wane but the discussions can be lively. Free registration is required in order to post; no guidelines are posted. The message board is intended for use by teens and anyone interested in YA literature. One caution: the site has a substantial amount of advertising, which can be distracting.

Hamilton Public Library Teen Online Book Club

www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton/LibraryServices/Teens/TeenSpaceTeenOnlineBookClub.htm

The teen page of the Hamilton Public Library (Ontario, Canada) offers a book discussion intended for readers age eighteen and younger. Discussion starters are posted on occasion; users may post a response after registering. Thorough use guidelines can be found under the "Get some help . . ." link. The summer

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discussion activity used a *Survivor* theme: twelve books were selected, with one book removed from the list each week. Check the Web site to see which one survived!

Not Your Mother's Book Club

http://community.livejournal.com/notyourmothers

This blog was developed to support a book club that meets at a San Francisco bookstore. The online community is intended for use by youth in grades seven through twelve, although librarians, teachers, and young adult authors are also welcome. A disclaimer notes that comments may not be appropriate for children under thirteen. Free registration with LiveJournal (www.livejournal.com) is required in order to participate. The blog allows use of avatars, "current mood" icons, and hypertext. While the conversation topics vary widely, there are frequent discussions of YA titles, descriptions of author events, and Q&A sessions with YA authors.

Pike's Peak Library District Teen Zone Message Board

www.websitetoolbox.com/tool/mb/teenzone

The Pike's Peak Library District of Colorado Springs maintains a busy message board that includes discussion of many topics of interest to teens, including books. The well-organized site has headings for topics including music, movies, books and "everything else." Graphic novels, manga, and anime are popular enough to have a separate section. The site enjoys a large readership (posts about Christopher Paolini's *Eldest* have been viewed nearly one thousand times, for example) and there are ongoing discussions of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, *Eldest*, and *Star Wars: Episode III, Revenge of the Sith*. Users must complete a free registration in order to post or to send e-mail to other participants; features include avatars, customization of viewing options, and e-mail access to other registered users. General library guidelines are posted.

Teen Read '06

http://teenread06.scls.info

This teen reading blog, started on June 1, 2006, is a project of the South Central Library System in Madison, Wisconsin. The blog is moderated by youth services librarians, who have posted descriptions and conversation starters for twelve recent YA titles. The initial postings also include links to find a copy of the book at one of the member libraries, read a review of the book, visit an author Web site, or view Web sites specific to topics presented in the book. The chosen titles reflect a variety of reading levels and interests and are targeted for readers from young teens to college students. Blog rules are clearly posted, and all comments are reviewed by a moderator before posting. Free registration is required in order to post to the blog.

Washington Summer Reading Blog

www.washingtonreads.org/blog

The Washington State Library began this discussion blog for middle-school-aged youth in April 2006. Users can browse the genre links or use the search box to find specific titles. The site presents clear guidelines for youth patrons and parents, and also features a "Parents' Guide to Internet Safety." Free registration is required, user identity is protected, and all comments are reviewed before being posted. A separate area of the blog is directed at librarians, outlining ways that teen librarians can promote the blog. The librarian area includes promotional bookmarks, flyers, and suggestions for attracting teen interest. YALS

What I've Learned from Teens on Teenreads.com

By Carol Fitzgerald

It's hard to believe that it's been more than nine years since we launched Teenreads.com. I remember the day we decided we needed this Web site like it was yesterday. In spring 1997, teens were showing up in the chat room and posting on the message boards for our adult readers at "The Book Report" on America Online (AOL), and their chatter about their favorite books was tiresome to the "grownups." Lest we alienate either group, we started our site for teens, geared toward readers ages twelve to seventeen. It was first called "The Book Bag" and was only available on AOL. Later we renamed the site Teenreads.com and moved all the content to the Web.

Today we have more than 250,000 unique visitors each month. We are the only Web site that speaks to teens exclusively about books; in turn, we have learned a lot from our teen readers. Here are fifteen things that they've taught us.

1. When we first launched, our editorial mix was a combination of new fiction titles, books that teens "should" read, and books they should "steal from their parents' shelves." About six months later, we realized that teens did not want to be told that they *should* read anything. We learned that they wanted to discover books on the site, not have an agenda given to them like they were in school. The "should read" titles were gone within a year. Instead we presented choices in much the same manner as we do for our older readers.
2. We tried different voices on the site: straight, cool, and hip. We learned to stop trying so hard and instead just talk to teens as we would other readers—with passion and excitement.
3. While adult readers still read print and other traditional resources for book and author information, teens gravitate toward the Web for news about new books and authors just as they do about every other subject. Thus, it is important to have solid information available for them. This is the first completely digital generation, and the way we relate to them through the Internet is crucial. We keep this in mind with each monthly update.
4. Contrary to popular belief, not everything needs to jump, make noise, or do cartwheels to amuse teens. Many notes that we get from our readers tell us that they are looking for choices and ideas on what to read, not tricks to entice them to pick up a book.
5. Many of our teen readers scorn "fluff" reading such as celebrity-driven titles or those about fad topics. They are looking for books with plot, depth, and strong writing. While we know our teen readers are not *all* teen readers, we recognize that they represent what we call "über" readers, and that they often are the reading trendsetters among their peers.
6. In a recent reader survey to which almost two thousand teens responded, 12.6 percent told us that the flap copy drove them to purchase a book more than any other influence. Motivating flap copy, an interesting title, a friend's recommendation, and author recognition all scored higher than "a great looking cover." Since teens do not judge a book by its cover, it's important to think about how you *describe* a book when talking to teens.
7. Our monthly polls give us a snapshot into some current marketing trends on teen readers. During a recent monthly survey, we asked teens if they'd read *The Da Vinci Code;* 36.6 percent had already read it and another 34.1 percent answered that they'd like to now that the book was out in paperback. What prompted us to ask them about this title? We realized that

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many of the teens were just ten years old when this book was first published in 2003, and in the last three years they actually had "grown into it." To them, the paperback version was both affordable and a "new" read. How many other books can this be said about?

8. The young adult market has become very "edgy" in the past seven years. I remember giving a speech to teen publishers the day after the Columbine shootings. At the time, I felt the writing in this market did not reflect the world in which teens lived. The writing was still centered on "happily ever after," while life was not reflecting this. I remember admonishing publishers to publish more realistic writing. Looking at today's titles, we see the envelope being pushed pretty far. In fact, there are now moments when I long for fewer issue-oriented titles. There are so many titles featuring coming out, cutting, depression, and fractured families as themes that there are times I do crave a book in which the writing is upbeat, but still realistic. Is there such a balance?
9. Some things do not change. In the aforementioned teen survey, 12.9 percent of teen readers told us that they like books about love and love interests. The top three categories were rounded out with 12.6 percent indicating coming-of-age tales, and 10.9 percent choosing true-life stories.
10. I would love to see book discussion guides made available for teens that sound less like study guides and more like the kinds of questions teens might be able to chat about without feeling like they were in school. But basically, I'd just like to see *more* discussion guides available. On this same note, I would love teens to stop asking for the answers to the discussion guide questions. (For the record, I pass on this opportunity and instead encourage students to read the book and think for themselves.)
11. We recently added "Coming Soon" and "New in Paperback" areas to the site, as well as features on both manga and Christian titles. Our goal is to give teens a place where they can find everything they want on the books and authors they love—and help them discover new titles as well.
12. We get reader mail. Lots of it. Here are the top five things teens write us about (in order):

    - Thank-you notes for reading suggestions/advice and author bio information
    - Requests for upcoming books, release dates, and so forth.
    - Requests for author bios and contact information
    - Thoughts on favorite books, books they've just read, and inquiries about what other people their age thought about those same books
    - Recommendations for new books similar to what they usually enjoy reading

    Often, the teens writing to us are eager to share and are just looking for a place to express their thoughts on what they've read.
13. Teens really connect with books and authors on a very personal level. Often, the biographical information they ask for exceeds what you'd find in a typical bio. Just last week, someone wrote in asking what Ann Brashares was like—specifically, if she was "nice, cool, and smart." A small percentage of the time teens ask for authors' contact information for homework help. The rest of the time, they want to tell the authors how they relate to their characters and to thank them for writing. They also get very defensive and protective about the books they enjoy—we've received numerous angry e-mails regarding the few negative comments that we've made in reviews we've posted.
14. Many teens write in looking for advice on how to start a reading group—from choosing or finding members and reading selections, to what to talk about and how to keep the groups going. Last year's survey showed that 84.3 percent of the teen respondents are not in book clubs; while 54 percent of them are interested, they just don't have the time or don't know where to start.
15. So what else matters to them? The authors or series features that typically receive the most page views each month are:

    - Laurie Halse Anderson
    - Ann Brashares
    - Meg Cabot
    - Caroline B. Cooney
    - Lois Lowry
    - Joan Lowery Nixon
    - Christopher Paolini
    - Clique series

    Our YALSA feature also generates high numbers, in addition to contests like the one we recently posted for Rebecca Wells and *Ya-Yas in Bloom*. According to last year's teen survey, these young adult authors are teen favorites (the top five male and female writers from the survey list):

    - Jerry Spinelli
    - Gary Paulsen
    - Eoin Colfer
    - Philip Pullman
    - Walter Dean Myers
    - Meg Cabot
    - Lois Lowry
    - Ann Brashares

WHAT I'VE LEARNED continued on page 41

FAQs Answered by the YA Galley Committee

By Edith Cummings, Tracey Firestone, and Diane Monnier

Why Teen Reviews?

Let's face it. We may love teens; we may love YA literature; we may love our jobs as librarians; but, that doesn't mean teens love us back. Teens don't necessarily trust our opinions just because we're older. Unlike younger children, teens like to stretch their boundaries, question authority, and mistrust adults—even librarians.

In the words of Jenny Knatz, seventeen-year-old coeditor of *Open Shelf: City of Mesa Library Young Adult Advisory Council Book Review Newsletter*:

> I hate to say it, but sometimes it's hard to trust a book that an adult recommends to me. Our tastes often differ to the extreme—what an adult thinks is fantastic can be something that I find terrible. That's why teen reviewing is so important. I trust that, for the most part, people my age see things the same way. If *they* say something is a must-read, I'll be more inclined to read it over an adult recommendation.[1]

(Ouch.)

If teens can't trust adults (and let's face it, would we really want them to? If they believed in us, we might start taking ourselves seriously, and then YALSA wouldn't be such a fun, vibrant, growing, organization!), then how can we connect them to teen reviews and teen recommendations? One way is to pay attention to the Teens' Top Ten (TTT) nominations and lists.

What's Teens' Top Ten?

Teens' Top Ten is the only YALSA list created *by* teen readers *for* teen readers. The books on the list have widespread popularity and the nominating groups are geographically and demographically diverse. The list of nominations is a great starting point for teens to find new books recommended by other teens. While the members of YALSA's YA Galley Committee do the legwork (checking eligibility, posting the nominations, and counting the votes), the nominations are given by teens, and teens vote for their favorite titles. TTT is a teen-driven endeavor.

The YA Galley Project began in the late 1990s as a pilot project. The plan was to find a way to connect publishers directly with their teen readers, allowing teens to preview new releases and provide feedback on everything from cover art to whether they'd recommend a book to friends. After several years of testing the idea, YALSA appointed a task force and in 2003 an official committee was born. The official charge of the committee reads as follows: "To facilitate the exchange of information and galleys of books published within two years among the voting teen group members as well as the nonvoting members; to annually prepare the Teens' Top Ten

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list for Teen Read Week (TRW) and to coordinate the public electronic vote."[2]

The charge doesn't specifically mention the relationship between YALSA and the publishers who have agreed to take part in this project, but without their support it would be much more difficult to find teen groups with the resources to read widely and to nominate new and forthcoming books. Without publisher participation, this would not be a viable project.

Why Are Publisher Members Interested in Participating?

At the 2006 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, a panel of publishers spoke as part of the program entitled, "I Can Get My Teens to Review Anything . . . And You Can Review Things, Too!" The panel was asked how publishers use teen reviews. Victoria Stapleton of Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers said:

> While we value the reviews and feedback we get from librarians and educators about our books, we always keep in mind that our primary audience is the young reader. We could not do what we do as well as we do without input from them. This is particularly important in the case of teen readers who are making independent choices about what to do with their time and attention. So we actively encourage and solicit feedback from them.

Jeanne McDermott, director of marketing at Farrar, Straus, and Giroux Books for Young Readers, commented:

> Teens trust each other's recommendations above all others. That is what makes their reviews so pertinent, not only to their friends but to those in the field who are concerned with young adult literature. All of us who work with teens want a reliable review source to quote when we introduce a title to other teen readers. YALSA's Teens' Top Ten allows teens to make their recommendations known in a public venue, open and accessible to all. Once titles have been nominated by a core group, other teens can participate and "voice" their opinions by casting their votes.

How Is the Teens' Top Ten List Created?

Every two years, YALSA's YA Galley Committee seeks applications for new review groups and selects fifteen groups for two-year terms. The fifteen groups of teens receive galleys of upcoming titles from more than thirty publisher members, and they are expected to write reviews for the publishers, which are also sent to the YA Galley Committee. During the course of their two-year term, the committee sees marked improvement in the quality of reviews coming from the teens as they read a wide variety of YA literature and learn to review more effectively.

Each cycle, five of the fifteen YA Galley groups are specially designated as TTT nominating groups. Ideally, those groups have already been involved as non-nominating groups for two years before taking on the extra duties required of them as TTT groups. In addition to their regular reviewing duties, these five groups are empowered to nominate the best books of the year for the annual TTT list. Nominations are not limited to just YA Galley titles and publishers; these groups are on the lookout for outstanding books from all corners of the publishing world. Titles require three nominations representing at least two different nominating groups to become an official TTT nomination.

Nominations close each year on March 15, giving interested libraries enough time to purchase the books and make them available for teens to participate in the online vote. During TRW each October, teens from across the country are encouraged to vote for their favorite books from the nomination list. The results of the public online vote are combined with a paper ballot from all fifteen YA Galley groups to create the annual TTT list.

How Can We Be a YA Galley Group?

First, visit the TTT Web site (www.ala.org/teenstopten) and from the "Tips for Librarians" page, download a copy of the official YA Galley review form. Next, introduce that form (or at least the same elements) to your book review group. Take the time to work with your reviewers and help them to develop as reviewers. Encourage them to add details to their reviews that could help a publisher know exactly what works (or doesn't) in a particular book.

When reviewing the applications, the YA Galley Committee is primarily looking for excellence in the sample reviews submitted. After that, the committee seeks groups that represent geographically diverse communities and tries to create a mix of school and public libraries, as well as a mix of groups with older and younger teens. The committee wants to encourage group leaders to raise excitement for a program such as this with some level of restraint. With room for only fifteen

groups in each cycle, competition is fierce. Be aware that your group may not be accepted the first (or even second) time you apply.

While the YA Galley Project is an exciting opportunity for teens to read new books, it should not be the only opportunity for your teens to feel that their voices matter. Use your groups' review forms to help guide collection development. Start a review newsletter or publish lists of teen recommendations. Allow your teen reviewers to help their peers find books that speak to them. Let your teens' voices be heard! YALS

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2. Young Adult Library Services Association, "About YALSA: YA Galley Committee Description," www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/aboutyalsab/yagalley.htm (accessed Sept. 7, 2006).

WHAT I'VE LEARNED continued from page 38

- Sarah Dessen
- Laurie Halse Anderson

These were the teens' favorite adult authors:

- Stephen King
- Mary Higgins Clark
- John Grisham
- Dan Brown
- James Patterson
- J. D. Salinger
- Sophie Kinsella
- Dean Koontz
- Alice Sebold
- Michael Crichton
- Toni Morrison
- Jodi Picoult
- Yann Martel
- Jon Krakauer

Finally, these authors were not mentioned in the teen survey, but are often written about in the e-mails we receive:

- Nicholas Sparks
- Wally Lamb
- Harper Lee
- S. E. Hinton YALS

Guidelines for Authors

Young Adult Library Services is the official publication of the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association. *Young Adult Library Services* is a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with young adults (ages twelve through eighteen) that showcases current research and practice relating to teen services and spotlights significant activities and programs of the division.

For submission and author guidelines, please visit www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/yalsapubs/yals/authorguidelines/htm.

Index to Advertisers

The Borderland Age and Borderline Books

The Early Practice of Reader's Advisory for Youth

By Jennifer Burek Pierce

Early reader's advisory for adolescents is less studied than reader's advisory for adults, yet librarians were deeply concerned with the best ways to interest young people in books during the first decades of professional librarianship. A limited number of articles and monographs describe key events in the history of library services to young adults and others offer biographic accounts of leading figures in youth services; still, few writers account for the ideological origins of librarians' work with younger readers.[1] These origins were broad ones. Because doctors, psychologists, and ministers all weighed in on the influence of books on teens' lives, reader's advisory once reflected the ideas of people outside the profession. The values articulated in these early years of librarianship were radically different from the ones most often expressed today. Looking at the history of how reader's advisory for youth began offers a thought-provoking perspective on professional aims in reading guidance.

Much as there is popular concern today about teens' time with computers, television, and music rather than with books, the librarians who shaped reader's advisory for young people responded to social concerns articulated by forces outside the profession. Then as now, ideas about young people and books reflected concerns for youthful well-being, both in adolescence and after. Although current professional values are much different from the ones articulated in librarianship's early years, it is useful to recognize the origins of professional practice and the changes of principle that have taken place over time. Dramatic statements about reading as a potential harm to young people may seem foreign now but represent a key legacy of early professional services, as librarians sought to use the best scientific and professional information available in the service of young readers.

Early Reader's Advisory for Adolescents

During the first decades of the twentieth century and before, librarians and other professionals interested in fiction and publishing gave considerable attention to adolescents' reading habits. This young reader was described in many terms, including "teen," "junior high school student," "intermediate," "youth," and sometimes simply "older boys and girls." At times, even references to children, in context, describe young adults. The professional literature of the early twentieth century indicated concern with the reading habits of youth between the ages of twelve and sixteen, a time of life one writer characterized as the "borderland age."[2]

Among the themes of this plentiful professional literature was an interest in good books. Whereas reader's advisory efforts for adults in this era focused on self-improvement as prescribed by cultural norms, librarians' recommendations to adolescents directed teens' attention toward wholesome literature that would compete with their enjoyment of such popular and affordable genres as the dime novel, with its allusions to sex and depictions of violence.

Librarians recognized the availability of cheap but questionable literature as a

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potential threat. One writer characterized lighter literature for young adults, including love stories, as "borderline books" and urged her fellow professionals to use these books to lead seemingly immature readers to "the constructive use of books of fiction."[3] More often, though, librarians and others concerned with reading described these titles as pernicious, immoral, and sensational literature. One early-twentieth-century *Library Journal* article expressed the anticipated connection this way: "Books . . . suggest thoughts, thoughts become motives, motives prompt action."[4] This mimetic model of reading attached strong significance and lasting consequences to young readers' choice of books.

Further, in an era when sexuality was deeply controversial and the means to treat sexually transmitted diseases or to prevent pregnancy were virtually nonexistent, the consequences of youth sexual activity were lasting. Discouraging interest in sex—a common if understated aim of early reader's advisory work—reflected not only moral beliefs but a sort of health advice.

Determining what constituted good or appropriate books for younger readers was in response to the prominent concerns of health professionals and voluntary associations of Progressive Era reformers known as the Purity Movement. This diverse group included preachers and politicians, medical doctors and mothers.[5] Their agendas, often centered around moralistic judgments about sex, involved a wide range of goals such as limiting access to sensational and immoral fiction; promoting or suppressing factual information about sex (depending on which faction of the movement was consulted); and ending prostitution. Members of the Purity Movement drew attention to a presumed association between adolescent reading and sexuality, a particularly sensitive dimension of the harmful outcomes associated with bad books. The language and values of this reform effort were echoed in the language and ideas in the library literature on reading and youth.[6]

Early library conference papers and articles, read in conjunction with other contemporary literature offering perspectives on youth reading practices, indicate that reader's advisory for teens developed concurrently with reader's advisory for adults but was informed by different motives and rationales. Much of this professional literature insisted on shaping the reading experience in order to protect youth and to preserve purity of thought and action. This guidance on reading constitutes the origins of youth reader's advisory, grounded in the concerns of the Purity Movement and related social reform efforts.

Progressive Era Cautions Regarding Reading and Adolescence

Statements about the presumed health impact of reading abounded in the late Victorian and early Progressive eras. There were cautions about reading's potential to encourage inappropriate thoughts and actions and the belief that reading could produce actual physical harm. Opinions about what constituted appropriate reading material varied, but belief in the need for moral, uplifting literature was expressed consistently by leading writers outside the library profession.

In 1899, Walter Taylor Field complained to the editor of *The Dial* about "sugarcoated sensationalism," insisting on the value of guiding young people's reading to produce "not only . . . a healthier literary taste, but . . . a sounder morality in the men and women of the next generation."[7] A virtual jeremiad against unwholesome literature followed. Everett T. Tomlinson's article "Reading for Boys and Girls" offered a history of youth literature, identifying its origins in Sunday school books in the late nineteenth century.[8] Tomlinson criticized both these didactic, moralistic works and the later action-oriented tales that succeeded them. He was concerned with the ability of writers to "appeal to [young readers], in a language they well know, to attempt better and greater things."[9] In the books that young adults ought to read, truth and instruction were desirable features, but teens were unlikely to find them without help: "For sometimes the pathways of literature require a guide to point the way as much as do the slopes of the mountain we may be ascending."[10]

Occasionally, early-twentieth-century writers expressed faith in the ability of young readers to profit from the stories that most interested them. J. P. True defended popular novels that depicted "rugged bits of the life of rugged boys," believing that purposeful, moral action would result; he wrote that he had "yet to hear of a boy whom those books failed to help upward by their subtle moral force."[11] The redeeming feature of these "cheap" stories was expressed in terms of their power to enlighten: "Out of his surroundings, however sordid, the boy was lifted."[12] While few professionals argued the merits of the dime novel, these ideas—that young readers should be encouraged to seek out good, uplifting stories—would continue to be found in professional writings.

G. Stanley Hall, whose *Adolescence* helped to establish him as the first modern psychologist to study the teen years as a distinctive developmental phase, also scrutinized young people's reading. Because of Hall's influential status as an expert on the teen years, the concerns he put forth regarding reading were significant, if profoundly different from current sensibilities. He insisted that certain content should be avoided because of potential physical and emotional harm. In 1905, Hall wrote on "What Children Do Read and What They Ought To Read."[13] He argued that the

"modern novel with its highly artificial and conventional treatment of anti-nuptial love, often treated in a somewhat risqué manner" was to be avoided as both "mawkish" and "perverted."[14] There was also a need to increase the number of "healthy girls who . . . read good things."[15] Later, Hall returned to these themes, adding that excessive reading confined "young people . . . in closed spaces in the usual reading postures" and exercised "only the muscles of the eye," the strain of which results in "eye defects" to be regarded as "a serious problem in racial hygiene."[16] In these addresses, Hall argued that unguided reading could cause both intellectual and physical harm.

Hall also reported research findings indicating "a rapid rise in the amount of reading chosen by . . . children themselves."[17] Hall encouraged professional and parental attention to young people's reading. The phrases he employed—such as when he connected reading to "the life of the race"—used the Purity Movement's vocabulary for concerns about reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases.[18] Librarians recognized Hall as an authority, and the library literature of this era encouraged practitioners to familiarize themselves with his shorter works, if they could not manage to read his two-volume treatise, a marathon read of more than fourteen hundred pages in its entirety.

Yet it is in these longer volumes that Hall put forth incisive views on young adults and their reading habits. He admitted the limited potential of reading as a force for good, writing, "I incline to think that many children would be better and not worse for reading . . . on the principle of the Aristotelian catharsis to arouse betimes the higher faculties which develop later."[19] Yet his broader purpose was "to sound a cry of warning in terms plain enough if possible to shock both quacks and prudes."[20] Hall was particularly concerned about adolescent girls, for whom books would "overburden the soul with the impedimenta of libraries."[21] He had further complaints against reading as well. He connected some percentage of suicides with the imitation of deaths described in periodical literature.[22] In his discussion of youth criminal behavior, Hall cautioned, "The reading of romance has great influence on the development of youthful passion," which "must not be roused before the powers which control it are developed."[23] It is this attitude, which saw excitement and imaginative power as forces to be contained, that contemporary experts voiced most strongly when describing the need to curtail young readers.

Dr. Mary Wood-Allen was another author who discussed reading for the purpose of suggesting its potential harm to developing minds and bodies. The author of best-selling and recommended manuals on youth conduct, Wood-Allen was regarded as authoritative because of her medical degree. She instructed young female readers, in a chapter titled "Painful Menstruation," to avoid excessive novel reading, citing it as a cause of both "premature development" and "the creation of morbid mental states which tend to the production of physical evils."[24] She assured them that their mothers did not prohibit frivolous reading simply because they had "outlived their days of romance."[25] Instead, it was the girls themselves who were ignorant of the effects of reading "thrilling, romantic episodes" that would "find an echo in the girl's physical system and tend to create an abnormal excitement of her organs of sex, which she recognizes only as a pleasurable mental emotion, with no comprehension of the physical origin or the evil effects."[26] Wood-Allen advised that young women "keep out of the realm of the artificial, the sentimental, the emotional" to avoid temptation, seeking instead "stronger, more beautiful self-control."[27]

Maurice Bigelow, a Columbia University professor of biology, was a well-regarded speaker on sexual health whose observations extended to recommendations about the nature of young people's reading habits. His comments ventured into the activities librarians now recognize as reader's advisory. He stated, "In the world's best literature there is much that teaches important lessons in the field of the larger sex education."[28] The literature "of direct influence in helping young people solve the problems of sex, we think first of that which holds up high ideals of personal purity" is important because "interpretation of life either real or in great literature may have profound influence on the development of one's philosophy of life."[29] Reading offered the adolescent "no more natural and unobtrusive way of approach" to forming appropriate judgments about life and sexuality in particular.[30] Thus, he indicated that carefully chosen books played a role in forming attitudes and served as an information base regarding sexual and reproductive health. In finding a pedagogical purpose for reading about romance and sex, his views represented a shift from those articulated by Hall and Wood-Allen.

Nonetheless, Bigelow raised concerns about immoral literature. "Against that type of fiction which presents sex problems that do not clearly 'point a moral,' the average so-called 'problem novel' of recent time, there should be general opposition by workers for the larger sex-education," he stated.[31] His argument both decried amoral literature and insisted on the need to guide young people's reading:

> Unlike the commendable novels, it is characteristic of the equivocal ones that no penalty is demanded or paid and no moral conclusion is suggested. In fact, the way is very much left open to an immoral interpretation. All such literature certainly tends to work against the aims of sex-education. Perhaps parents and teachers may cooperate to keep much of this kind of

> literature out of the hands of young people, but the safest procedure is in cultivating a taste for literature that does teach helpful lessons of life.[32]

The then-popular play *Damaged Goods* represented the kind of literature Bigelow denounced. While accepting the need to provide young readers with health information, Bigelow did not sanction allowing them to form their own opinions or encounter views of uncertain morality.

These ideas about the need to limit access to material that presented topics once regarded as entirely taboo are echoed in the professional library literature through the first decades of the twentieth century. Where these scientists reported their concerns directly, naming the problems to be confronted with contemporary terminology, library literature relied on phrasing that rendered these concerns somewhat more indirectly. Nonetheless, the literature on identifying appropriate reading materials for adolescent readers and encouraging their reading of works of sound moral and literary quality was congruent with the statements and suggestions of those involved in social reform of sexual behavior and attitudes.

Progressive Era Library Literature on Youth Reading

From the first years of the professionalization of the field, librarians engaged in dialogue regarding younger patrons' reading, with articles and reprints of conference presentations on this topic appearing in the earliest issues of *Library Journal* and *ALA Bulletin*, as well as in other professional periodicals. That these publications reveal concerted efforts to meet the reading interests of young people by connecting them with good literature is not inherently surprising; the apparent connection between decisions to guide young people's reading and contemporary social movement concerns about sexual health and morality form a compelling basis for librarians' insistence on moral literary works.

Samuel Swett Green's "Personal Relations between Librarian and Readers" is often cited today as an early discussion of reference interviewing skills.[33] To his contemporaries, however, Green's comments pertained equally to what young patrons read. Green observed that "The librarian is often consulted about courses of reading" that drew upon his or her "judgment," before concluding that "there are few pleasures comparable to that of associating continually with curious and vigorous young minds, and of aiding them in realizing their ideals."[34] Green also commented, albeit briefly and indirectly, on the quality of reading materials, cautioning librarians that "The collections of books which make up the contents of the circulating departments of our libraries have been provided for the use of persons of differing degrees of refinement and moral susceptibility, and for those who occupy mental planes of various altitudes."[35] This early article established the issues regarding young readers that were to concern librarians in the decades to come: that offering what has since become known as reader's advisory was an important component of service to youth and also that there was a relationship between moral behavior and reading.

In the years that followed, others in the field would take up Green's statements. Mary A. Bean was among the first to protest strongly that reading could constitute harm to youth, decrying a "craze for books" and "indiscriminate reading" that concerned parents and educators alike.[36] Reading light stories in rapid succession—a veritable "Charybdis"—was to be prevented; instead, parents and librarians should strive to see children "lessen the quantity and improve the quality" of their reading.[37] Although indirect in her statements about the nature of harm that might be caused by reading, Bean articulated a theme that would be developed with increasing specificity: books were not necessarily a benign force in children's development, and guidance was necessary to protect young readers from potential harm.

The 1891 issue of *Library Journal* reported on a talk given at the Massachusetts Library Club, "How Can the Character of Reading Be Improved?"; E. P. Thurston noted that occasional reading of light fiction may be warranted "to rest the proverbially overtaxed American brain."[38] This librarian advised a range of strategies for engaging youth in the activity of reading, many of which, such as displays and reading lists, remain familiar.

Elsewhere, cautions against unadvised reading took a more ominous tone. In 1895, librarians were warned against allowing children to pursue reading independently, thereby risking "contamination" because young readers were "in the possession of a power that is equally potent for evil as it is for good."[39] The problem was explained to members of the profession:

> For nowadays a child who can read will read; and if we do not lead and direct his taste, the enemy, who is ever lying in wait for poor, faltering humanity, will give the child abundant opportunity of the knowledge of evil; and this evil, whose knowledge is death to the soul of every pure boy or girl, is crowding us at every corner of life.[40]

These concerns, accompanied by suggestions to prevent young readers from accepting "phrases as principles, turgid sentiment as virtue, and jingling words as the measures of right living," hoped instead to see youth "upward in the path of virtue."[41] Another librarian and educator acknowledged that the reading program

he described intended to draw "the attention of the pupils from a pernicious class of reading."[42] These articles present strong, even hyperbolic statements, which echo the concerns of reformers and experts who provided advice on how to ensure that reading would not lead young adults to jeopardize their souls or their bodies.

References to purity as a reading outcome endured. In 1915, one article argued that less wholesome literature threatened children's morality.[43] Articles also compared library work with young readers to the activities of reform work. "Today when we are busy making and enforcing pure food laws for the protection of our bodies, there is even greater need for the framing and enshrining in the hearts of all our people, of pure book laws for the protection of our souls," opined one librarian.[44] The writer's concern and frame of reference would be repeated by other librarians, as when Whitbeck argued,

> Miss Hunt once in a paper referred to the sanitary precautions that parents took to protect their children from the "deadly house fly, the mosquito, the common drinking cup and towel." We feel this keenly when we look at these thousands of books cast in the same mold and realize some parents are unwittingly allowing their children's moral estimates to be lowered.[45]

The concerns Whitbeck identified are no longer so prominent in the twenty-first century. In fact, some elements of her list, namely the references to the common cup and towel, are no longer meaningful items to most who would read her words; in enumerating these concerns, however, Whitbeck ventured into the controversial territory of sexuality. The common cup, used by travelers to drink at public rest areas, had been blamed as a source of such communicable diseases as syphilis.

Whitbeck was not the lone librarian boldly making mention of issues of sexual and reproductive health in the pages of leading library publications. Effie Power, author of the early textbook *Library Service for Children,* warned her peers to:

> Let the grown person brood over the stern realism of sordid surroundings, abnormal sex problems, hopeless effects of heredity and environment on character and what not, the healthy boy and girl instinctively rejects all this in favor of the story where industry is rewarded and love comes into its own.[46]

In statements like these, librarians showed awareness of the prominent reform movements shaping the society in which they and their patrons lived. By connecting their professional practice with the aims of reform workers who sought to improve society, librarians demonstrated the value of their own work.

Reader's Advisory: Then and Now

The early professional literature on reader's advisory to youth indicates that concerns about the nature of reading did not simply express what might be regarded as Victorian prudery or conservative moralism. Instead, these cautions reflected the scientific thinking of that era as popularized by reformers. While seeking to protect youth from adverse social and health outcomes from which there was no recovery, librarians still wanted their young patrons to enjoy reading and to take pleasure in literature. Thus, the reading of good books had a significance altered by time and the development of medical treatments that mitigate some of the threatening aspects of sexual experimentation.

Efforts to keep books that might inspire curiosity about sex or true crime now seem old-fashioned and out of touch with statements promoting freedom of inquiry and access to information. Yet, in their day, these overly cautious views represented the leading perspectives of medical science and social reform. That the professional past can appear so different from contemporary ideals of service suggests the need for continuing critical assessment of the aims of library service to young people. YALS

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Reynolds, Tom K. *Teen Reading Connections*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2005; ISBN 1555705065; 149p. $49.95.

This is a worthy addition to Neal-Schuman's Teens @ the Library series, "designed to ensure that public and school librarians have the tools they need to develop and adapt their collections, services, and programs to meet the diverse—and ever-changing—needs of young adults." As a librarian that serves both adults and teens in the Sno-Isle (Wash.) Libraries, Reynolds has lived up to the series' goals with this compact, easy-to-read guide to playing matchmaker between teens and reading at school and public libraries. Each chapter begins by highlighting selections from YALSA's "Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth." Within each chapter are several booktalks, booklists, interviews, and relevant resources, followed by short lists of the key concepts covered in each chapter as well as references. Topics covered include fiction and nonfiction materials, booktalking, book promotions, and teen reader's advisory. The chapters provide a useful introduction to those new to serving teens, as well as useful tips, resources, and new ideas for veterans.

If you can only have one reference book on how to excite teens about reading, this book covers it all and will be an excellent addition to public and school libraries.—*Reviewed by Sarah Nelsen, School Corps Librarian, Multnomah County (Ore.) Library*

Harris, Frances Jacobson. *I Found It on the Internet: Coming of Age Online*. Chicago: ALA, 2005; ISBN 0838908985; 161p. $35.00.

Written for the professional librarian, this book takes a look at the information-seeking behavior of teens. The content is comprehensive and very informative, with good tips and suggestions for libraries and librarians on how to take advantage of new technology in order to better serve teens. The content is somewhat dense, reading much like a research paper, but the data is very useful, containing insights into adolescent behavior, socialization, and development. This information is practical and very useful for librarians working with teens, especially for those that advocate for teens in their library and need specific data about young adult behaviors. The book is organized into three parts, taking the reader from established and new technology to tough issues like morality and ethical behavior on the Web.

Librarians will appreciate the well-detailed index, as well as the author's no-nonsense explanation of technologies, user behavior, and the unique needs of young adults. This well-researched, authoritative guide is packed with good information and suggestions for those working with and advocating for young adults in the library.—*Reviewed by Rochelle Carr, Fresno County (Calif.) Public Library*

Pfeil, Angela B. *Going Places with Youth Outreach: Smart Marketing Strategies for Your Library*. Chicago: ALA, 2005; ISBN 0838909000; 119p. $32.00.

Pfeil, a virtual reference librarian for Tutor.com's Librarians by Request and former youth services and outreach librarian, has written a helpful guide for librarians looking to become more involved in youth outreach. She states that marketing and outreach should go hand in hand as librarians work to create library presentations and programs to serve youth populations. In a clear and concise format, Pfeil outlines the process of creating a marketing plan and the different ways to reach out to agencies that serve youth populations such as schools, daycares, and community centers. For example, why not create a library newsletter to be mailed specifically to your younger patrons? Or why not take your storytime program out on the road to doctors' offices or shopping malls? This book gives youth librarians some great tips on how to incorporate unique marketing ideas into their outreach strategy. Pfeil also gives a step-by-step overview of how to plan, implement, and evaluate outreach programs.

This book is a must-read for librarians in public library systems that may not have an outreach plan, but are looking for ways to become more involved in reaching out to youth populations in their communities. Librarians—especially those who are just starting to do outreach to help market their libraries—will find the ideas in this book helpful.—*Reviewed by Heather Timko, Teen Librarian, Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library*

Heide, Ann, and Linda Stilborne. *The Teacher's Internet Companion*. Toronto: Trifolium Bks., 2004; ISBN 1552440451; 356p. $39.95.

This book will help any teacher unfamiliar with the Internet. The arrangement and clear language make this resource easy to read and navigate for quick, topical reference questions. Each chapter contains a wealth of information with sidebars including quotes, hints, teaching tips, and tech talks. Helpful Web sites pepper the resource, covering a broad spectrum, from e-publishing for students to educational games to math problems. The book delves into such topics as HTML, complying with copyright laws, online safety rules, responding to inappropriate materials, e-mail, and evaluating Web sites. The book also contains lesson plans to help educators incorporate the Internet into classroom studies. An accompanying CD-ROM lists Web sites categorized by such school subjects as art, English literature, English as a Second Language (ESL), music, and environmental studies, to name a few. Web sites for groups of all ages can be found within each category. For instance, the arts category contains links to Michael's Kids Club Online, Florence Art Guide, Art Sites for Educators, and the Andy Warhol Museum. The CD-ROM also contains tutorials for Microsoft, Macromedia Dreamweaver, and Adobe programs.

While this book is geared toward teachers, its general content makes it a great learning tool for anyone looking for a basic understanding of the Internet. Buy this one for professional use and also for public libraries.—*Reviewed by Jennifer Rummel, YA Librarian, Marion I. Mohr Memorial Library, Johnston, R.I.*

York, Sherry, ed. *Tips and Other Bright Ideas for Secondary School Libraries,* Volume 3. Linworth, 2006; ISBN 1-58683-210-7; 168p. $36.95.

This book contains a compilation of best practices and helpful hints that have been submitted to *Library Media Connection* magazine by secondary school librarians. It is the third such volume that has been issued, and is geared toward librarians and technology specialists who work with middle and high school students, teachers, and administrators. The resource is conveniently organized by topic with a number of practical hints and procedures to use under each heading. Tips for getting teachers to use the media center, organizing special events, enticing older students to do some leisurely reading, working with volunteers, making the media center more accessible, giving booktalks, teaching research skills, and making the most of the library's Web site are all included within these pages.

Fans of the first two volumes won't be disappointed with the latest installment, and those new to the field will find the suggestions helpful in managing their media center and making the most of their time. What makes this little book so helpful is the fact that all of these practical tips have been tried out and used successfully by others in the field.—*Reviewed by Joann Absi, Media Coordinator, Eugene Ashley High School, Wilmington, N.C.*

Campbell, Patty. *Robert Cormier: Daring to Disturb the Universe*. New York: Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2006; ISBN 0385730462; 304p. $14.95.

This book is a delight to read. Campbell, a young adult librarian and author, gives a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most well-known and gifted writers for young adults, Robert Cormier. The author offers his general biographical sketch in the first chapter. From here, Campbell explores each of Cormier's novels, weaving intimate details of his thoughts and feelings behind each piece of writing. She includes critical comments from reviewers to complement her research and, by the end of the book, one is able to envision Leominster, Massachusetts, with Cormier walking down the street. Readers will gain an understanding of the ideas that went into each book and a deeper appreciation for the man who wrote them.

Aimed at those who are interested in the history and literary criticism of Cormier, this book is great reading for anyone "daring to disturb the universe." This is a welcome addition to libraries wanting information on Cormier's life and work.—*Reviewed by Cara A. Waits, Teen Services Manager, Houston Public Library*

Grimes, Sharon. *Reading Is Our Business: How Libraries Can Foster Reading Comprehension*. Chicago: ALA, 2006; ISBN 0838909124; 155p. $35.00.

Grimes, a school library media specialist at Lansdowne Elementary in Baltimore County, Maryland, presents a unique approach to the issue of fostering reading comprehension among today's school-aged children. Due to students' declining comprehension test scores and adults' declining free reading, Grimes identifies the librarian as the "critical partner" in fostering reading comprehension and, as such, provides a seven-step reading strategy for use by librarians. The steps are: connecting, visualizing, questioning, finding answers, determining importance, inferring and predicting, and analyzing and synthesizing. Each chapter is devoted to one of the seven strategies, leaving Grimes plenty of room to clearly define and explain each of them. The chapters also contain current research, and readers are given an example of how each strategy can be used in an actual classroom or library setting. Grimes incorporates multiple worksheets throughout, and even includes blank copies of the worksheets in the back of the book. Each strategy comes with a list of what the author identifies as "Great Books" to complement the strategy, divided into the categories of dependent, emergent, and independent readers.

While this book is a definite must-have for all school librarians, public librarians and teachers alike will find these strategies invaluable. Grimes has written a book relevant to any individual interested in fostering reading comprehension.—*Reviewed by Elizabeth Sargent, Collection Management Librarian, Questia Media, Houston* YALS

the YALSA update

ASSOCIATION NEWS

YALSA and ALSC Announce Odyssey Award for Best Audiobook

YALSA and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) are pleased to announce the Odyssey Award, a new award for the best audiobook produced for children or young adults. The award, which will debut at ALA's Midwinter Meeting in 2008, is sponsored by *Booklist* and administered by YALSA and ALSC.

"With teens downloading music, podcasts, and e-books in record numbers, this is the perfect time to announce the Odyssey Award for best annual youth audiobook," said YALSA President Judy Nelson. "As authorities in selecting young adult books, YALSA is excited to be working with such prestigious organizations as ALSC and *Booklist*."

"A little over a decade ago, unabridged, spoken-word versions of children's books were a rarity," said ALSC President Kathleen T. Horning. "The Harry Potter [series] audiobooks really helped to popularize this medium for children and raised it to an art form. The Odyssey Award will set the standard for excellence, pointing children and teens toward the very best in audiobooks."

A committee consisting of ALSC and YALSA members will select the award. The 2008 award will represent the best audiobook released in 2007.

"We're very excited to be sponsoring the Odyssey Award," said *Booklist* Editor and Publisher Bill Ott. "It's the perfect complement both to our ongoing sponsorship of YALSA's Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in young adult literature and to the magazine's commitment to coverage of the increasingly important audiobook field."

Linda Braun Selected As YALSA Blog Manager

Linda Braun, educational technology consultant for LEO: Librarians and Educators Online, has been selected as manager of the YALSA Blog.

In her new role as blog manager, Braun will be responsible for the content and look of the blog and will work closely to recruit and oversee designated bloggers. The mission of the YALSA Blog is to provide a virtual space for publishing information about time-sensitive issues and to provide a forum for members and the library community to discuss matters relating to the YA field. The YALSA Blog can be found online at http://blogs.ala.org/yalsa.php.

"The YALSA Blog allows YALSA to give members the opportunity to write and respond to important events, news, and technology related to teens and teen library services," said Braun. "As blog manager, I'm looking forward to working with members to discover topics that need to be covered on the blog, and then work with those in the field who can write on those topics."

Braun has held numerous positions in the American Library Association (ALA) and YALSA including chair of YALSA's Web Advisory Committee and Teen Tech Week Task Force, and member of ALA's Web Site Advisory Committee. In her independent consulting work, she focuses on helping libraries, schools, and other educational organizations figure out the best way to integrate technology into their programs and services. Braun frequently leads workshops on emerging technologies and their impact on teen life. She also spends time working directly with teens in libraries in order to help create technology-based programs that meet teen needs. Braun has written seven books on technology and libraries, is a columnist for *Voice of Youth Advocates*, and teaches at Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science.

"YALSA has always been fortunate to have many talented members who put their expertise to work for the division," said past YALSA President Pam Spencer Holley. "Linda's selection as YALSA Blog manager is one more example of member talent being put to good use."

YALSA Announces New Interest Group for Students

At the 2006 Annual Conference, YALSA's Board of Directors voted to establish the YALSA Student Interest Group. The co-conveners for the group are Rachel Besara and Jami Schwarzwalder. The purpose of the group will be to provide student members with a forum to exchange information relevant to their particular needs, a place to network, and a means for becoming active in the association. Students of any type—undergraduate, MLIS candidates, and Ph.D. candidates—are welcome to participate. The group will meet at ALA's Annual Conference, but attendance at the confer-

ence is not required in order for individuals to be active in the group. Unlike committees, members are not appointed to interest groups. Any member who would like to participate is welcome and can do so by contacting the co-conveners.

As an official interest group, members are able to plan and sponsor programs at ALA's Annual Conference, prepare and publish works, provide content for YALSA's Web site, and conduct other activities. For more information about interest groups, go to www.ala.org/yalsa and click on the link on the left called "Governance." To learn more about the YALSA Student Interest Group, contact Schwarzwalder at jamischwarzwalder@gmail.com.

Major Motions from the YALSA Board of Directors

The YALSA Board passed the following items at the 2006 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans:

- Supported sending up to two members to the ALA Emerging Leaders initiative, dependent upon YALSA candidates being accepted and funding being available.
- Changed the charges for Division and Membership Promotion, Publishers' Liaison, Outreach to Young Adults with Special Needs, and Research committees to remove the awards and grants responsibilities given to them, and established five juries (including one to choose the Great Book Giveaway winner, formerly the responsibility of the Executive Committee), with either three or five members each, whose sole purpose is to select the award winners, one for each award/grant. Jury members will serve a one-year appointment.
- Appointed a Board subcommittee to investigate the pros and cons of (1) adding an intern to the Board; (2) adding an at-large Board member; and (3) adding a secretary to the Board. This subcommittee should report to the full Board at Midwinter Meeting with their findings.
- Accepted the conflict of interest policy (Board Document #4) as amended.
- Voted that Board Document #5 be approved. This motion would change the number of votes necessary for a title to be included on the official Quick Picks list from 6 to 7. This change would be in effect as of Midwinter 2007.
- Charged the Professional Development Committee with providing oversight and direction to YALSA's e-learning program as detailed in Board Document #6. The Organization and Bylaws committee will update this committee's charge.
- Approved the guidelines for the position of Youth Participation Coordinator as written in Board Document #7 and voted that these guidelines be reevaluated at Annual 2007.
- Changed the Financial Advancement Task Force to a standing committee of five members, with the Fiscal Officer serving as a consultant. A virtual member would be permitted.
- Accepted the proposal from membership to form an Anime Discussion Group starting at the end of Annual 2006.
- Adopted the proposed Business Plan with the removal of the reference to the Marketing Plan and the addition of the section on the Friends of YALSA.
- Adopted the FY07 budget as written in Board Document #11.
- Accepted the current slate of YALSA programs in concept as presented for Annual 2007, including the "Video Games as a Service" proposal.
- Accepted the Communications Plan in concept and thanked the Communications Task Force for their hard work.
- Returned the proposed procedures concerning the Great Graphic Novel Committee with the instruction that the procedures be reconciled with the approved task force guidelines, and that they work with Pam Spencer Holley and Nick Buron to return amended procedures to the Executive Committee by September 30.
- Directed the Publishers' Liaison Committee to work on the Support YA Lit Day Initiative with the YALSA office, beginning immediately, with results to be reviewed at Annual 2007.
- Voted to add an international representative to the Virtual Regional Advisory Board.
- Directed the Web Site Advisory Committee to establish guidelines for creating and maintaining a wiki, and to submit a report to the Executive Committee by October 1 that would include the pros and cons of open vs. member-only access and the possible need for a content moderator.
- Charged the Youth Participation Committee with developing a survey to solicit information from members and publishers about their (and their teens') interest in participating in a teen summit, and report to the YALSA Executive Committee by October 1.
- Voted to create a Student Interest Group of YALSA, pending determination that at least fifteen of the signatories on the presented petition are YALSA members.

Resolutions

Resolution for Francisca Goldsmith

Whereas Francisca Goldsmith has served for three years as a member of the Board of Directors of YALSA with style, grace, humor, and incisive wit;

Whereas Francisca constantly has to explain to people (even fellow Board members) that her name is Francisca, not Francesca, but manages to do so without losing her temper;

Whereas Francisca has ably and skillfully balanced a demanding career at the ever-controversial Berkeley Public Library with YALSA activities, serving as an SUS and InfoPeople trainer, and writing the book *Graphic Novels Now;*

Whereas Francisca can always be relied upon to come to conference with an interesting story, such as a cross-country train trip;

Whereas Francisca has an eye for the jewelry potential of the ribbons attached to her conference badge;

Whereas Francisca has generously educated her fellow Board members on various subjects, including the value of single-malt Scotch (preferably from Islay, medium peat, never on ice);

Whereas Francisca can be relied upon to provide the Board with information on past decisions by pulling out one of the teeny notebooks from the Francisca archive and finding the pertinent quotation;

Whereas Francisca has ably served as liaison for various YALSA committees, including Audiobook Selection, Graphic Novels, YA Galley, Research, Printz, and the Morris Task Force;

Whereas during her term of office on the YALSA Board, Francisca was also the chair of the 2006 preconference "Reading with Your Ears";

Whereas Francisca served with two other Mothers of One Son on the Outstanding Achievement Award Board subcommittee;

Therefore be it resolved that the YALSA Board of Directors express its gratitude and appreciation for her dedication during her term of office, and wish her well in her future endeavors.

Resolution for David Mowery

Whereas after many years on the Alex Award Committee, David Mowery was elected to the Board of Directors, and quickly became President of YALSA coincidentally at the same time that YALSA's Deputy Director returned to school to work on her doctorate; YALSA's increased membership forced the decision to give up ALA's small division stipend and earn its own way; and ALA decided that a full-time Executive Director was needed, David had to quickly help interview candidates for this new slot and then "break in" Beth Yoke to the YALSA way of doing things;

Whereas David handled all these transitional matters with great aplomb and tremendous patience, accompanied by lots of Acid-Ease medications and stiff martinis; while always dressed in a style worthy of *GQ*'s cover, as evidenced by his tasseled loafers and other noteworthy shoes from his extensive collection; and

Whereas David ably served YALSA as President-Elect, President, and Past President, in those same tasseled loafers, bringing honor to the Brooklyn Public Library, bestowing Brooklyn Public Library mementoes on all the Board members and earning the disdain of his cat for his continual absences from home;

Whereas during his presidential term David not only oversaw the launch of the new strategic plan and the increase of *YALS* from two to four issues, but also, and most importantly, helped triple the cash donations for Teen Read Week (TRW) 2005 thanks to his well-placed, and well-heeled, contacts;

Whereas his presidential term also saw the fourth Serving the Underserved (SUS) training with the awarding of three scholarships from Highsmith; 125 attendees at the Best of the Best preconference, with publication of the newest Best of the Best pamphlet; the launching of YALSA's mentoring program; the establishment of the Great Graphic Novels for Teens Committee and the fifth anniversary of the Printz Award;

Whereas David kept the most meticulous meeting notes of any YALSA President, resulting in no Board member ever being able to weasel out of a task; wielded the gavel with the deftness of an executioner; and tried to include all Board members in discussions;

Whereas David continued to serve YALSA even during his immediate past-presidential term when he hosted the first National TRW Kickoff event with Q'orianka Kilcher and Jacqueline Woodson at Brooklyn Public Library;

Whereas David's sense of humor and fair play has earned him respect and friendship from all YALSA members;

Therefore be it resolved that the YALSA Board of Directors thank him for the service he gave to the association and wish him well in all future endeavors.

Resolution for Jessica Mize

Whereas Jessica Mize has served for three years as a member of the Board of Directors of YALSA with humor, enthusiasm, diligence and patience;

Whereas Jessica Mize has served well on the Morris, Library School Database, and other Board subcommittees, including Chairing the Outstanding Achievement Award Group with other Mothers of One Son;

Whereas Jessica Mize has successfully balanced her Board duties, her 2007 Printz Committee duties, her Serving the Underserved Trainers duties, her state association duties, and her new job duties;

Whereas Jessica Mize's young son has supported her three years of travel for the YALSA Board;

Whereas Jessica Mize has been a supportive liaison for multiple YALSA committees and even agreeable about adding new ones all the time;

Whereas Jessica Mize has been a mentor for new YALSA members from her area especially;

Whereas Jessica Mize's attitude knits together her love of young adults, their literature, and their librarians;

Therefore be it resolved that the YALSA Board of Directors express their gratitude and appreciation for her dedication during her term of office, and wish her well in her future endeavors.

Editor's note: From this issue forward, the new members announcement that previously appeared in the YALSA Update has been moved to YALSA's Web site at www.ala.org/yalsa.

Hello, Groin, *good-bye prudishness. Kudos to Beth Goobie for pushing the boundaries of Teen Lit! Goobie writes with passion and compassion...surely one of the best novels this year—or any year.*

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
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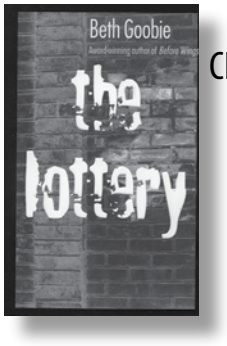

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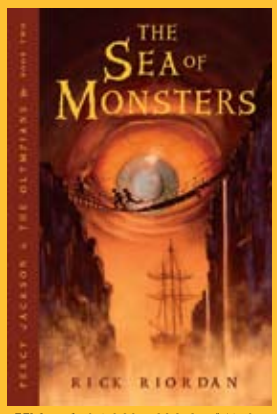

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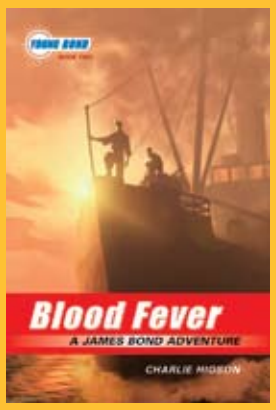

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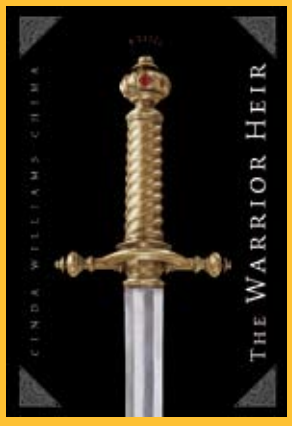

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