

“Making Space for Young Adults: Three Stages Toward Success”

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While young adults (teenagers) are routinely recognized as constituting nearly 25% of public library users in the United States, the vast majority of libraries devote more space and design attention to bathrooms than to young peoples’ spatial needs. Worse, there is no scholarly research connecting young adults to the civic space of libraries. There are no metrics, no evaluation standards, and no best or comparative practices. This paper attempts to inaugurate just such an exploration.

Library buildings, like all public spaces, represent and manifest ideals about who counts and what activities matter in a community. In particular, public library buildings trumpet values about being open and democratic spaces. At the heart of this paper, however lies the notion that young people have yet to be considered part of that civic community. The remedy, of course, is realizing that libraries should express this value in the designs of their public space. But to get there libraries must address the central question: How can they deliver developmentally-appropriate library space for young people?

Likely due to long-prevailing *de facto* institutional preoccupations with collections, library standards largely have conflated “Young Adult space” with the mere shelving of materials for young adults. These practices already rely most commonly on a meager allocation of shelf space within, or adjacent to, children’s sections or on repurposed paperback racks. Sometimes a YA magazine collection appears in the children’s section, sometimes interfiled with adult magazines. For all of our professional claims to making materials consistently accessible, such *ad hoc* practices have existed in libraries for decades and illustrate how we have kept the YA experience at arm’s length. Historically, libraries have considered young adults entitled neither to space for their needs nor an equitable share of

the library's commons environments.<sup>1</sup> Classic Carnegie buildings, for instance, bifurcate into only "sides:" for children and adults. Adults then interpret the consequent underutilized library resources and negative youth perceptions of libraries as youth antipathy and apathy. Service barriers for young people can further be seen in the physical aspects of generation after generation of new and refurbished library buildings, policies, and procedures and in the ways in which young people socially experience libraries – "as aristocratic, authoritarian, unfriendly and unresponsive."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, in the United States there is growing awareness of this decades-long inequity as libraries begin to see how they can add public value by providing young people developmentally-appropriate spaces.<sup>3</sup> Initiated by the Los Angeles Public Library's purpose-built landmark TeenS'cape project (2000)<sup>4</sup> and aided by the subsequent introduction of "YA Spaces of your Dreams," - a column in every issue of *Voice of Young Adults (VOYA)*,<sup>5</sup> - and the appearance in 2002 of a guide to redecorating YA areas,<sup>6</sup> libraries are learning that YA spaces have a place within the broader context of the uniquely democratic and age-integrated public spaces that libraries offer their communities. Indeed, the most recognized YA services advocate, Patrick Jones, noted that the emergence of YA-specific spaces ranked among the most exciting innovations in the field: "libraries," he said, "are saying this service is important, and they want to profile it. This is a huge change."<sup>7</sup>

Another reflection of how young adult spaces are being taken more seriously is that the very first "post-occupancy study" of any young adult space in library literature appeared in the November-December 2006 issue of *Public Libraries*.<sup>8</sup> In it, an architecture professor at the University of California at Berkeley conducted a two-phase ethnographic study examining the degree of YA customer satisfaction achieved in a new branch facility. This is likely the first branch library ever to offer a distinct young adult aesthetic design for a new library building. In this YA space, young people not only played central roles in the design and décor of the space, but local youth were the study's primary subjects in the evaluation process as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Chelton, M. K. (2002). The 'Problem patron' public libraries created. *The Reference Librarian*, 36(75/76), 23-32. Kelly, T. (2007, January 2). Lock the library! Rowdy students are taking over. *New York Times*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rubin, R. E. (2004). *Foundations of library and information science* (3rd ed.), (p.46). New York: Neal-Schuman. See also Marston, J. (2001). *Narrative summary report of teen focus groups for the young adult services program*, (p. 8). Sacramento: California State Library. For other studies on decades-old young adult attitudes and libraries, see Cook, S. J., Parker, R. S., & Pettijohn, C. E. (2005). The public library: An early teen's perspective. *Public Libraries*, 44, 157-161. See also The Benton Foundation. (1996). *Buildings, books, and bytes*. Washington, DC: Benton Foundation. And DeWitt-Wallace-Readers Digest Fund. (1999, May). *Public libraries as partners in youth development*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Yet with all these considerations, libraries have been very slow to take into account the service opportunities inherent in them. The landscape of young adult services is rapidly changing as, among other things, increasing numbers of young people gravitate to the more adaptable "spaces" of virtual and immersive worlds, as well as to ever-cheaper, ever-smaller, evermore versatile communication devices. Libraries will face keen competition to attract them into their currently conceived physical public spaces. Further, the rapid increase in non-traditional school environments in the U.S. also will impact library services. The alternative, continuation, and small school site movements combined with the nation's growing population of homeschooled youth offer new ways for libraries to attract young people.

<sup>4</sup> Bernier, A. (2000). A library 'TeenS'cape' against the new callousness. *Voice of Youth Advocates*, 23, 180-181.

<sup>5</sup> *VOYA* is published bi-monthly by Scarecrow Press. The column features examples of library space redecoration projects submitted by practicing young adult librarians.

<sup>6</sup> Taney, K. B. (2002). *Teen spaces: The step by step library makeover*. Chicago: American Library Association.

<sup>7</sup> Gorman, M. (2006). 'Mr. inspiration:' Patrick Jones on knockout teen services, mentoring, librarians, and yes, loving wrestling magazines. *School Library Journal*, 52(8), 32-34.

<sup>8</sup> Cranz, G. (2006). Body conscious design in a 'teen space: Post occupancy evaluation of an innovative public library.'" *Public Libraries*, 45(6), 48-56.

These early strides, the TeenS'cape project in Los Angeles, the dedicated *VOYA* column, the published guide and expanding expert recognition have all undoubtedly contributed to the growing consciousness about an historic inequity. Nevertheless they offer only very qualified advances. The regular *VOYA* column reproduces only anecdotal and simple narrative descriptions. And even under the best circumstances, with some libraries attempting to advance the more recent service paradigm of "youth development," the results are seldom distinguishable from conventional library designs. Libraries may ask architects or designers, librarians, and even young people to come together as a team to create a spatial solution. However, a kind of "Triangle of half-knowledge" then develops. Architects frequently know little about the functioning of libraries or young people. Librarians generally do not possess architectural backgrounds and do not know a great deal about how young people enact spaces of their own. And young people usually know little about the functioning of libraries or architecture. What develops, then, is this "triangle" nearly destined under the best circumstances, to produce mediocrity.

So while these early efforts are important, *there nevertheless exists no systematic evidence-based research, guidelines, methods, or metrics to facilitate developmentally-appropriate YA spaces.* As is pointed out in her seminal historical review of youth services research, Christine A. Jenkins stated, "If... library programs and services for children is insufficiently studied... programs and services for young adults is nearly nonexistent."<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, and informed by predominate and erroneous media representations, the routinely exaggerated and inaccurate claims found in adult non-fiction literature, in the news media, and in public policy - even tellingly in library bond campaign literature linking reduced crime with library services, libraries *institutionally* convey a belief that young people present more problems than they are worth.<sup>10</sup> Given these circumstances, it should come as no surprise that libraries perpetually underfund YA services, under-develop professional capacity, and under-theorize a YA services research agenda, as well as manifest a rather uninformed vision of youth spatially. Libraries need and deserve research on how to better serve young adults.

Thus, what fledgling efforts have been made to date do so without data or history, systematic evaluation of best practices, skill capacities, institutional infrastructure, evaluation, or theoretical grounding. For the profession, this *lack of systematic spatial knowledge* yields a raft of challenging questions. What data should be collected and how? How do youth conceive of and enact (use) public space? What do library leaders need to know to effect successful YA spaces? To what degree do age-appropriate YA spaces add design value to libraries? How can libraries better identify and incorporate youth's spatial aesthetic preferences? What age-appropriate aesthetic overlaps exist between what is enticing for young adults compared to what is acceptable to libraries? What attitudes and concerns do professionals (including architects) and adult patrons exhibit about YA spaces? How does the presence/absence of a separate YA space influence recruitment or retention of professional YA staff or service capacity? What are the most important factors that can improve library space (seating options, access to technology, food permissibility, etc.)? How to balance young peoples' needs to develop social capital in space with space libraries need for materials and services? How can libraries improve

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<sup>9</sup> Jenkins, C.A. (2000). The history of youth services librarianship: A review of the research literature. *Libraries & Culture*, 35, 103-40.

<sup>10</sup> For a sampling of the more-received books consistent with this claim, see Pipher, M. (1995). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York: Ballantine. Garbarino, J. (1999). *Lost boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can save them*. New York: Free Press. Simmons, R. (2002). *Odd girl out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt. Hardy, K. V., & Laszloffy, T. A. (2005). *Teens who hurt: Clinical interventions to break the cycle of adolescent violence*. New York: Guilford Press. Prothrow-Stith, D., & Spivak, H. R. (2006). *Sugar and spice and no longer nice: How we can stop girls' violence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Twenge, J. M. (2006). *Generation me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled--and more miserable than ever before*. New York: Free Press.

current spaces or policies based on factual information about youth behavior? What are the best techniques for involving young people in space design and how can young people best be included in the community design review process? What are the best evaluation metrics for current and new spaces? What is YA spatial equity? And to what degree do libraries “design out” young people because they suffer institutionally under the same misconceptions about contemporary youth behavior as does the majority of the society?<sup>11</sup>

Further, without a more systematic knowledge and research base, introductory YA courses in library schools, conventionally focused as they are on YA literature, proceed without meaningfully engaging the complex topic of space or its connections to services, programs, or developing relationships with young adults.

Lacking YA spatial knowledge, libraries design and enact spaces in ways that contradict or conflict with nearly every aspect of normal and developmentally-appropriate young adult public behavior. The consequences of these institutional deficits are that libraries, inadvertently or not, create what I have elsewhere described as a *geography of no!*<sup>12</sup> Libraries create spaces in which youth are told “no” for doing or wanting things entirely appropriate for young people, such as sitting convivially in small groups. Instead, libraries enforce one-to-a-chair policies.

The ultimate goal of my work is to improve the administration of equitable library services for youth and increase their involvement in the library’s service profile. My specific approach to this goal is based on the assumption that spatial equity brings with it other dimensions of service equity.<sup>13</sup> But while we now have some anecdotal evidence, the field does not have empirical evidence to substantiate or establish best practices. And so my near-term objective is to develop an analytical and theoretical framework in which to conceive and apply some preliminary standards to achieve developmentally-appropriate YA spaces informed by a refreshed and accurate portrait of today’s youth. Such findings will help library professionals assess, prioritize, and evaluate current spaces and involve young people in future redesigns.<sup>14</sup>

What I would like to present to you today represents my experience as a Young Adult Specialist librarian since the mid-1990s and some preliminary findings I’ve developed since then as a design team member and consultant to five different architecture firms and as the individual most responsible for introducing YA space equity to the profession. This work thus incubates a language of

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<sup>11</sup> Chelton, M. K. (2001). Young adults as problems: How the social construction of a marginalized user category occurs. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 42(1), 4-11. Kelly, T. (2007, January 2). “Lock the Library! Rowdy Students Are Taking Over,” *New York Times*, p.1.

<sup>12</sup> Bernier, A. (2003). The case against libraries as ‘safe places’.” *Voice of Youth Advocates*, 26, 198-199. Bernier, A. (2000). Young adults, rituals, and library space. *Voice of Youth Advocates*, 22, 391. Bernier, A. (1998). On my mind: Young adult spaces. *American Libraries*, 29(9), 52.

<sup>13</sup> The dedication of specific space for library service to children prefigures the YA circumstance. In the instance of the development of the central library of the St. Louis Public Library system in 1912, the hiring of the first children’s specialist librarians was preceded by “space dedicated specifically for children.” Kimball, M. A. (Winter 2007). From refuge to risk: Public libraries and children in World War I. *Library Trends* 55, p 455.

<sup>14</sup> More broadly, as the concept of “space” brings together issues of culture, history, power, and policy, the implications for dissemination of this research promise to inform (if not inaugurate) discussions in architecture, urban planning and design, education, justice studies, and public administration, as well as youth-related domains of public policy. Finally, because youth space in general is a new arena for systematic study, this research has the possibility of teaching other design professionals how to think about young people in public space. And in this scenario, libraries do not follow, they actually lead. As argued by several scholars, the concept of “youth space” per se has been perpetually ignored by the design and spatial arts. From among many examples, see White, R. (1990). *No space of their own: Young people and social control in Australia*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the West*. London: Routledge. Childress, H. (2000). *Landscapes of betrayal, landscapes of joy: Curtisville in the lives of its teenagers*. Albany, NY: State University of New York. Aitken, S.C. (2001). *Geographies of young people: The morally contested spaces of identity*. New York: Routledge.

youth-specific experience in public spaces, generates menus of adaptable ideas, and articulates evaluative criteria. And I present all that in the context of three increasingly thick rubrics or levels of YA library space. For each of the three levels I provide responses to “the what,” “the how,” and anticipated “impacts” of developing purpose-built YA spaces. And each level builds upon the previous so that the third level includes most everything introduced to that point.

## **Level 1. Decoration**

The first level of treating library space amounts to applying some basic decorative practices. The point here is to dramatically improve the visual experience young people encounter with existing resources and materials as they browse the most popular materials available.

A) *The What* of this Decoration level treatment requires increasing what shelf space already exists by aggressively and strategically weeding the current collection. Conventional definitions of “YA space” is usually limited to this concept of linear shelf feet and most libraries today at least segregate out some specific “YA literature,” unfortunately most always it is only the fiction material. Once the shelves have been weeded and pruned, the staff should study and enact visual merchandising techniques (face outs, posters, and a host of related techniques). Furthermore libraries should make a concerted effort to incorporate the graphic representation of local youth art , experience, and culture into any new space project. Local youth art and culture can be manifest in many ways: ranging from the purchase of commercially available popular culture images to the posting of local high school achievements to regularly rotated and curated youth-produced artwork, writing, and photography.

B) *The How* of achieving Decoration level treatments rests on upgrading and cultivating professional and paraprofessional staff shelving techniques. It requires that staff create a menu of shelf decoration techniques and that they share and develop these techniques with all appropriate staff. It requires that staff study local youth and borrow as many of their aesthetic preferences and practices as possible. And the best options include involving young people in both identifying these things but actually enacting them as well. Architectural drawings or facilities staff are *not necessarily* required to achieve Level 1 Decoration space.

C) *The Impacts* on the library of this Decoration Level of treatment requires that the YA materials continue to be aggressively weeded and that the shelf merchandising be maintained by both professional and paraprofessional staff. Under-performing materials can be interfiled with other collections, reassigned, or dispensed with in any number of ways. This does require some staff training or retraining and keeping a tight focus on collection and shelf maintenance. Staff will also be broadening conventional definitions of youth participation – including young people not simply in the selection, but the merchandising of the collection as well. These measures do not require any supplemental funding. And staff is not asked to make major accommodations in the library’s overall spatial operation. However, the impact on circulation will be immediate and very positive.

## **Level Two: Makeover**

With more than mere shelf space to work with, the Makeover Level treatment adds the Decoration Level treatments discussed above (the What, How, & Impacts ) to the introduction of modest furniture and fixture choices. Above and beyond the basic elements of furniture and fixtures, however, among the most important factors in a Makeover is that young peoples’ own developmental needs are inscribed into the new space. And the most critical component of this factor is the inversion of the

library's traditional privileging of materials for a heightened accommodation of young peoples' social experience.

Unlike for library audiences of adults and children, young people, beyond satisfying the imposed queries of curricular demands, are not attracted to the library chiefly for its collections holdings. And if libraries desire to deepen their connections to young people they must spatially enact the aesthetic and developmental preferences for that age group just the way they do for adults and children respectively. Further, advancing a Makeover Level design without incorporating young peoples' developmental needs into the redesign may ultimately offer only heightened spatial competition with other more powerful library user groups like adults. A Makeover without these considerations runs the very real risk of raising expectations only to disappoint when youth lose the competitive struggles between which spatial enactments are sanctioned and those that continue to be marginalized.

A) *The What* of the Makeover Level treatment, in addition to the elements identified in the Decoration Level treatment, attempts to articulate a separate "footprint" in an existing building, a separate "spatial identity" from the other service departments and units in the library. This includes establishing an "edge" or perimeter to delineate the YA space from other library zones.

A separate YA space footprint includes conventional introductions of freshly painted walls and perhaps ceilings. It may include new windows or new window dressings. Likely a high quality Makeover would include at least some new carpeting. A Makeover might well also include a "signature shelving unit" or other techniques for achieving what architects call an "implied barrier." And above all, a Makeover Level treatment would certainly included the introduction of new seating elements. The best approach is to not simply include "new" seating elements but a conscious effort avoid standard "table and chair solutions" to maximize the variety of seating options as well.

B) *The How* of the Makeover Level treatment includes developing and deploying staff capacities for planning, selecting, and scheduling the necessary activities. Library staff, for instance, may not possess much experience working with facilities management personnel and their various scheduling demands.

A second dimension of how a Makeover succeeds is through the ways in which non-YA staff are involved, prepared, and kept informed of these changes. This is particularly true when the Makeover represents the first move a library is making toward spatial equity for young people. It is very common for non-YA staff to misunderstand and/or express varying degrees of resistance and trepidation at the prospect of devoting valuable library resources to an otherwise marginalized patron group. Being involved and availed of the steps and stages of the project helps all staff make the necessary adjustments as the project begins to impact the library's service profile.

A third dimension of "the how" of the Makeover Level includes a much heavier infusion of youth participation in the drafting and revising of a space's plans. Here the staff should have spent some time seeking youth input on choices of furniture elements as well as floor and wall coverings and other new fixtures. Staff should prepare a list of acceptable options first and then ask local youth to discuss and decide upon the final choices. This can occur informally or more formally through surveys and well-run focus groups.

A fourth dimension is the introduction of YA space-specific technology. This can include a very wide range of options. At the lower end, installing a simple music system helps provide a more YA-centric atmosphere, particularly when the library does not own a large music collection - because young people can be invited to bring their own music into the library via their PDA devices. At the higher end of the technology spectrum libraries can install multiple computer stations capable of

accommodating shared experiences (rather than one person per station) and video screens for watching movies and for bibliographic instruction, among other high end options.

A fifth dimension of the Makeover Level suggests a different role to be played by the library's YA materials collection. Conventionally, a library will shelve all YA and curricular materials together – irrespective of their circulation history or potential. This storage function, however, represents another manifestation of a library-centric privileging of collections and can dramatically hinder or conflict with a youth-centric vision of the public space as a social experience. Consider instead developing a very lean and strategically focused collection of highly desirable and highly merchandized YA materials on the fewer YA shelves and re-locating less well-performing materials to other locations such as interfiling them with adult collections. Thus the YA space becomes more of a showcase for very popular materials as well as something of a “launch-pad” connected to the larger library collections.

A sixth dimension more seriously treats an articulated space for professional staff than can a merely Decorated Level treatment. While not necessarily requiring a reference or service “desk,” YA professionals should be allotted a sufficient quantity of space for basic work tools and materials however interpreted.

The final dimension of the Makeover Level includes the necessity for substantial administrative support. Makeovers can include a significant fiscal impact. So library administration should be cultivated and focused from the very start of the project. Not only is administrative support necessary to help develop the funding sources for the Makeover project but administration also plays a key role in keeping non-YA staff and community support interests informed of progress. Administrators might, for instance, invite YA staff to make presentations at the library's Friends group or write a column in the library's annual report.

C) *The Impacts* of the Makeover Level treatment are considerable. Unlike with the Decoration Level treatment, the Makeover will commonly require work over the span of a year or more. However, in many instances, architectural drawings or sophisticated design skills are helpful but not necessarily required. Also, depending on the degree of changes instituted, there may be a rather small fiscal impact involved. Cost of a few new ottomans, for instance, will hardly require a major capital outlay. Staff impacts can be challenging, however, as staff adjust to a more inclusive service model.

One commonly reported impact on service, for instance, may well be a more active YA volunteer program. As young people develop connections with their space and relationships with staff the desire to participate in the shaping of the library's service as a volunteer can be expected. So staff development in volunteer administration is a good idea to anticipate as a new space opens.

The innovations brought down from the Decoration Level treatments and integrated into the Makeover Level will also continue to impact the library. Greater involvement of young people, the continued use of collection merchandising techniques, and the attempt to create a separate spatial identity will insure a much higher profile of the YA space.

### **Level Three: New Design and the Coming of “4dspace”**

A purpose-built young adult space designed into a brand new library facility is still extremely rare. Indeed, none of the current marquee or model YA spaces fit that description. So far they have been re-designed into existing library structures.<sup>15</sup> Thus much of the following remains hypothetical and theoretical. Nevertheless, we can derive many important concepts from what we do already know.

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<sup>15</sup> The most notable YA spaces remain the Teen'Scape department of the Los Angeles Public Library & Teen Central at the Phoenix Public Library. Both of these model spaces resulted from redesign projects in existing buildings. Several other notable YA spaces either recently completed or are under various stages of design or construction also fit this description.

Finally, libraries can take one step further by introducing young people to the increasingly pervasive “fourth dimension:” digital technology-enhanced spaces certain to appear in their futures.

A) *The What* of a YA space at the New Design Level includes developmentally-appropriate YA library spaces containing all of the Decoration and Makeover Level treatments. These elements include privileging of young peoples’ social experience over materials and shelving units, in addition to establishing a clear edge/perimeter/identity, and a high profile for the graphic representation of local youth art, experience, and culture.

Beyond these basic elements a New Design level should derive from a comprehensive and professionally-rendered building process and program. Spatial design and development at this level requires collaboration with architects and design professionals. It involves reviewing and revising conceptual designs and plans. Furthermore, as few design professionals bring significant experience working directly on public spaces designed for or with young people it will likely become incumbent on library staff to both advocate for young people and serve as an intermediary to insure that their components and contributions to the building’s planning and program process address their developmental needs and maximizes their preferences.

Furnishing a young adult space, as with any new building, must be addressed systematically and thoughtfully. Young people should play a significant role in making final decisions on major options and selections. Among these considerations should be a concern for maximizing seating options, showcasing new information and communications technology, the incorporation of a higher degree of young peoples’ aesthetic values, and a higher degree of amenities of value to them – such as vending machines.

New Design Level treatments should also consider the broad teaching roles that thoughtful spaces themselves can assume in the lives of young people. Working closely with design professionals, libraries, for instance, can deliver enticing spaces appealing to young people no matter what their dominant learning mode. Often subtle design considerations can appeal and excite youth with dominant kinesthetic, aural, and visual learning propensities.

Furthermore, YA spaces, because of their arguably greater freedom from design conventions and common expectations of what libraries “should be” from the point of view of adult library users, can more easily incorporate newer “green” spatial solutions. Recycled rubberized floor treatments, for instance, have already emerged as a preferred choice of young people. By offering youth green choices it offers them a higher degree of civic responsibility in selecting more sustainable options, but it can also teach other, perhaps more reluctant, library user groups about those options as well.

Finally, the appearance of increasingly pervasive technological and communications experience, particularly in the lives of young people, suggests that libraries can help pioneer the interactive hybrid architecture called “4dspace” (fourth dimension space).<sup>16</sup> Fourth dimension space interprets digital and communications media in physical form and promises to blur conventional separations between work and play spaces, between the retrieval of information and its uses, between reading and producing literature. Approached from the digital side we can experiment with new media such as Second Life in exploiting higher degrees of interactions with young people and imagined spaces. But we can also enlist the creative intelligence and energies of architects and designers to enrich physical spaces with higher degrees of interactivity as well. And in doing so libraries can enter a new realm of connecting young people with not only library materials but environments and atmospheres that lie in their futures.

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<sup>16</sup> *Architectural Design* 75. (January/February 2004). 4dspace: Interactive Architecture. London: Wiley-Academy.



**B) *The How*** of a New Design Level YA space requires a still very rare and substantial institutional commitment. Administrative support must appear evident from the start. Top administrative oversight regarding the degree and quality of youth participation is essential in many respects. The executive officer would ideally insure that youth participate even in the selection, or at least the evaluation process, of the project's architect. Furthermore, administration should insure that the architect includes young people in each step of the major phases of design and construction. Young people, for instance, should learn about and participate in reviews of the conceptual drawings. Administration would also insure that staff, community support groups, and other concerned agencies (such as a city's facilities department personnel) be informed and welcoming of young peoples' participation. Finally, administration would insure and build-in appropriate staff skill capacity to fully incorporate a YA service profile from the start of the project.

At the same time that administration insures the involvement and incorporation of young people in all the important phase of the New Design treatment of a YA space, library staff should also anticipate gaining a higher degree of exposure to a variety of new skills themselves. The YA staff should remain familiar with the planning and scheduling of the project's major phases. The YA staff should facilitate meaningful discussions between young people, the design professionals, facilities staff, and library administration. Contemporary YA professional competencies, for instance, now call for the incorporation of young people in envisioning and executing a young adult service profile.<sup>17</sup> But given that few YA professionals possess substantial experience working closely on new building projects, in addition to serving as an effective youth advocate during the design and construction of a new building, YA staff also gain valuable professional exposure to a wider range of experience in working so thoroughly on a new building design.

**C) *The Impacts*** of a New Design Level treatment require considerably more substantial roles than the previous two levels of YA space introduction. The design of a purpose-built, developmentally-appropriate YA library space does not necessarily require different factors or considerations than the Makeover Level treatment. However, the degree of implementation does necessarily require more time, skill, funding, youth participation, and professional collaboration than either of the first two levels.

Of surprise likely to no one, designing a new building requires years of preparation and hard work on the part of many people from inside the library and out. Nevertheless, the years of community and staff meetings should also include a changing cast of young people to be represented at every major stage. Young people may not be involved to the extent, degree, or frequency that the professionals are involved. But exposing youth to the developing community resource of a new library at various strategic junctures, negotiated from the start with the architect and design professionals, should now be a serious consideration. Representative young people should be trained to read and discuss conceptual and design drawings, for instance, as well as critically assess their ideas.

Funding is also a consideration of course. But funding the design of a YA space in a new building ought not necessarily add astronomical costs to the project particularly if the space is conceptualized from the beginning and approached like any other part of the facility. Some elements will be YA space-specific, such as furniture or shelving units or a higher degree of technological sophistication. But every region or zone of a new library contains its own specific requirements. The important consideration here is that the YA-specific needs be articulated and considered from the beginning.

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<sup>17</sup> Young Adult Library Services Association. Young adults deserve the best: Competencies for librarians serving youth. <http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/profdev/youngadultsdeserve.cfm>. (Accessed 30 April 2008).

Among the more complex impacts on a New Design Level treatment remains, for several reasons, the introduction of significant youth participation. Neither libraries nor design professionals are necessarily wired to involve young adults as partners. Participatory innovations in professional Young Adult Specialist librarianship presents a still rather new paradigm in contrast to decades of considering youth either “at risk” or not considering them at all. The rest of the profession is far behind in these considerations. And architects and other design professionals frequently involve clients as little as possible, to say nothing of considering young adults as clients and partners.

But involving young people from the selection of the architecture firm, through the construction phases, and even through to the post-occupancy evaluation is essential to fully producing a developmentally-appropriate YA library space.<sup>18</sup> Staff may require special training to attract, facilitate, and sustain youth participation across the years a new building design requires. Different models of youth participation are indicated. Different modes of communication and input are needed. And there are differing intensities of participation as well, ranging from tightly facilitated focus groups through more loosely orchestrated virtual participation as the project matures.

As with other levels of YA space design, non-YA staff should be included in a New Design Level treatment. Once again, introducing the concept that young people deserve partner and library user status along with other constituencies can require a cultural shift for many library professionals. That this “partner” status entitles them to an equitable share of the library’s public space can prove equally challenging to young people themselves. Thus it is incumbent upon the library’s administration, YA staff, and the design team to model, demonstrate, and perhaps even defend a proper allocation of time and fiscal resources to meaningful youth participation in the YA space design.

An even more challenging and progressive posture on young adult participation in the New Design Level treatment includes youth participation across the entire project, not simply with respect to the YA space. Indeed, if they are well-prepared, young people are certainly capable of contributing meaningful insights into many phases of a new building design. Such a vision of youth participation promises to yield multiple and complex benefits for youth development as well as raising the profile of young people in the library as well as in the community at large.

## Conclusion

They are “a disruptive force that interrupts the study of serious readers.” Constantly “talking and giggling.” Always eating in the library. Stealing library materials. Preening and strutting. They’re interested only in “trivial things” and creating “chaos” in the library.

When students and librarians in the United States hear this passage, they guiltily recognize it as an everyday screed against young people. So they laugh nervously, when it is revealed that these observations were actually made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by *male* librarians in the United States against *middle-class white women!*<sup>19</sup>

Female library users were accused not only of disrupting proper library order but were thought to be threatening the very social fabric of respectable society itself.<sup>20</sup> Exasperation at these *outrageous* behaviors reached a head in the 1880s. And in response to all these pesky women, public libraries attempted to minimize their impact on “serious” library users and began *begrudgingly*, to give “ladies” a room of their own as it were, their own *space*. In this “room of their own” they could talk and

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<sup>18</sup> For the only example of a post-occupancy study conducted about a young adult library space see Cranz (2006).

<sup>19</sup> Van Slyck, A. A. (1996). The lady and the library loafer: Gender and public space in victorian America,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, 226.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

giggle, preen and strut, and pursue their “trivial” little interests - without disturbing “serious and scholarly” gentlemen.

The point here is that American culture gradually accepted women as entitled agents in the public world. And libraries *made* space for them. Later, as women gained an increasing share of professional status and authority as librarians, those women *made* space for children. A half-century later in U.S. history, and under various racially-segregated schema, libraries incorporated non-white patrons, and then later still fully incorporated non-white citizens as entitled citizens in non-segregated libraries. U. S. libraries gradually made space for non-English speaking populations and supplied materials in their respective languages. They made space for handicapped patron access. They made space for computers. Indeed, libraries are constantly changing the concept of who “counts” and what activities “matter.” Historical references prove useful here because they can give us a sense of change and dynamism that is difficult to achieve when examining only discrete factors of daily life or mere anecdotal snapshots.

Considering our own young people as fully entitled citizens is something long overdue. That we are only at the beginning of developing this language for a public space so proud of its aspirational creed “free to all” is both shameful and optimistic.

But we are at a new beginning. And to return to the question I asked in my introductory remarks, how can libraries deliver developmentally-appropriate space for young people, the answer depends on particular circumstances to a large degree. But all our libraries can do *something* to improve their appeal to young people and entice them into better regarding the materials and services we work so hard to offer them, even if that effort includes only paying more attention to decorating modest spaces. And many libraries can do more than “something” and manifest a higher regard for them in library space by recapturing a piece of library real estate and giving it a makeover. What I outlined briefly today represents both a state-of-the-art framework for getting started and a calling forward of libraries to experiment, play, and conduct research on what spatial practices, methods, and techniques will best serve our desires to incorporate this otherwise marginalized library user population. My hope is that libraries and communities will indeed begin to “play” more by involving their young people earlier in whatever design plans they envision for their buildings.