

Listening to Young People: Case Studies from Singapore & Sweden



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Overview

- Research aims
- Innovations in Singapore and Sweden:
 - Verging All Teens (VAT) in Jurong, Singapore
 - PUNKTmedis in Stockholm
- Research conclusions
- A quick insight into young people's services in England

A brief introduction

- I work for The Reading Agency in the UK (www.readingagency.org.uk)
- I lead the English programme for young people's library services – *Fulfilling their Potential*
- I was the first librarian to participate in the Clore Leadership Programme
- I have 13 years' experience in public libraries

Research aims

To investigate:

- new models of library provision for young people in Singapore and Sweden
- how young people had been involved in shaping the new services
- how successful they had been in attracting young people into public libraries
- the library services' plans to further develop their provision to young people

Why choose Singapore & Sweden?

- 2 very different case studies / societies
- Both had new forms of provision for young people:
 - Verging All Teens (VAT) opened in June 2004
 - PUNKTmedis opened in February 2005
- Young people as active ‘change agents’ rather than passive recipients of library services

Research methodology

- Semi-structured interviews with library staff
- In Singapore, interviews with young people
- Visits to VAT & PUNKTmedis
- Observing young people using the new spaces
- Literature focused on ‘active participation’ of young people

What did I hope to achieve?

- To stimulate innovation within English public libraries
- To share with library colleagues around the world
- To encourage other libraries to involve young people in transforming services

Verging All Teens, Singapore



- Situated on top floor of Jurong Regional Library
- Developed and managed by the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore
- Open 7 days a week from 10.00 – 21.00
- A new form of provision which actively involves young people
- Developed as part of general upgrading of Jurong
- High level of teenagers in this part of Singapore



NLB's Vision for VAT

- To create a space for inspiration, dreams, expression and exploration through a dynamic environment, filled with opportunities for teens
- To make the library the place of choice for teenagers
- To enable teenagers to think and speak for themselves



Why develop VAT?

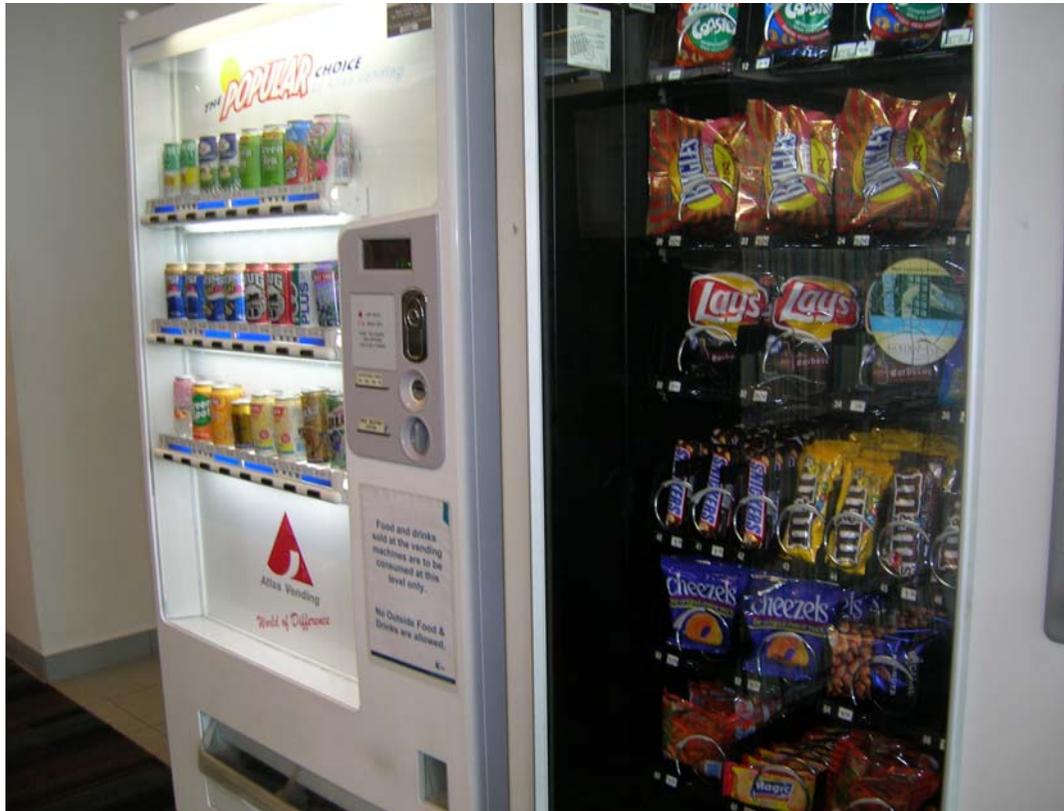
- ② Singapore youth population (defined as 15-29) was likely to increase gradually over the next 10 years
- ② Younger group (aged 15-19) set to increase to **36%** of total youth population (aged 15-29) by 2010
- ② Constitutes **15.9%** of total active membership, a decrease compared to children's active membership of 22%
- ② National Library Board (NLB) has experience of developing 'niche' services for different customer groups
- ② NLB commissioned research had shown that teenagers in Singapore are 'narrow focused learners' and do not tend to read for pleasure

What young people said they wanted....



- A trendy space of their own
- With a different name
- A range of facilities including:
 - A graffiti area
 - Café facilities
 - Graphic novels
 - Events and activities
 - Music / DJ console
 - Music CDs, etc
 - Relevant book collections
- Young people as programme organisers

What's on offer in VAT?



- 1200 sq. metres for young people
- Different 'zones' for different uses:
 - 'Earth Zone'
 - 'Coolection'
 - 'Oasis'
- A range of programmes & events
- Bookstock for young people's needs
- A relaxed 'chill out' space for teens
- DJ / Console facilities

Events & Programmes



pseudo book club

holistic teens



fast forward

showteens





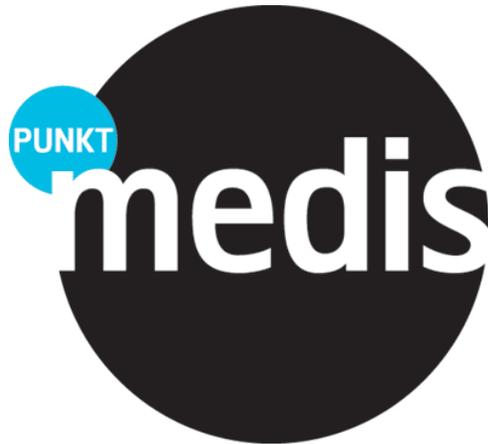
PUNKTmedis in Stockholm



- @ Youth Library within Medborgarplatsen Library
- @ Opened in February 2005
- @ Designed by young people
- @ High numbers of teenagers in this part of Stockholm
- @ Late opening hours

Stockholm Public Library's Aims

- ② To 'pilot' new approaches to young people's library services
- ② To create a space specifically for young people
- ② To develop a range of programmes & activities for young people



“This age is when you develop the most and are the most curious and you are changing a lot. This is the age you should need the library the most. So what could we possibly do to reach this group?”

City Librarian, Stockholm

What's on offer in PUNKTmedis?



- Books and audio-visual material aimed at young people
- Exhibition space
- Workshops for school groups
- Events / activities
- A 'chill-out' space

Events & Programmes



- Home of creative writing magazine 'Ponton'
- Events include slam poet, Bob Hansson
- Stand-up comedy events
- Manga events
- Ongoing workshops with local schools

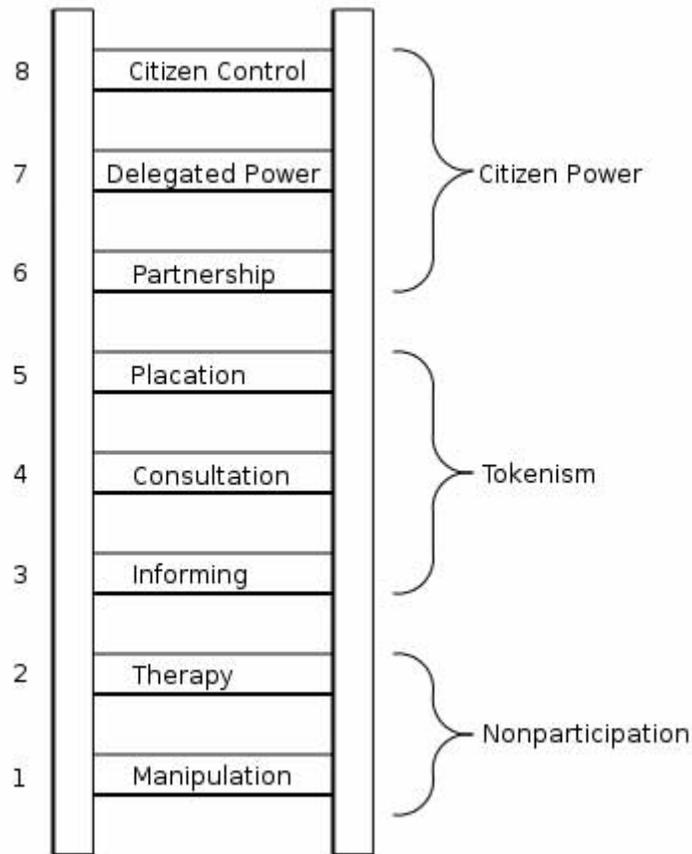
“Once they started a fire in the library.....but now they’re so nice. Now they are cool..... I like it when they climb up and sit in the window. I want them to feel they can hang out there and it’s OK.”

Librarian in Stockholm





Involving young people



Moving from consultation....
To involvement

Developing a shared vision with young people

“A dynamic environment where teens are inspired to live their dreams, express themselves and explore themselves”



How have young people been involved?

- Teen Management Committee (TMC) in Singapore
- Design of the space
- Arranging events and programmes
 - “Teen Dudes”
 - “Teen Ambassadors
- Helping to resolve issues / difficulties
- Informal dialogue / relationships

“Teens are a very fickle group. For it to remain relevant, it’s essential to involve them – to keep them in touch. As we grow older, it’s harder to remain relevant”.

JJ, 19, a young volunteer in Singapore

Research conclusions.....1

- Young people want libraries to offer interactivity and active engagement with resources
- Programmes & activities will bring them to a space (as will a café!)
- Listening to what young people want and delivering it will build trust and involvement
- Young people are keen to get involved in designing library spaces

Research conclusions.....2

- Huge value in involving young people in shaping the vision as well as the space
- Sustaining young people's involvement is more challenging
- Risk taking and experimentation is critical

Recommendations

- Involve, involve, involve!
- Involve young people early
- Involve young people meaningfully
- Involve users and non-users
- Make it fun and creative!
- View your staff as facilitators, coaches and mentors rather than as librarians
- Take risks!

Innovations in England

- Plan to establish a network of 'Book Bars'
- Aimed at young people aged 13-19
- Young people as volunteers
- Gain accreditation for their involvement
- A 'social franchise' model

Thank You!

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