
Introduction

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YOUNG ADULT SERVICES were experiencing a period of vitality and growth when *Library Trends* published an issue on the subject in October 1968. For young adult specialists and their clients, it was a time of excitement and promise. Since that time, however, there has been a steady decline in public library staffing and resources for the twelve-to-eighteen-year old age group.

Preliminary statistics from the first national survey of public library services to young adults (YA) indicate libraries devote an average of only 16 percent of their budgets to YA collections and only 11 percent employ a young adult specialist ("Preliminary Stats Prove Libraries Shortchanging YAs" 1988).

Since 98 percent of secondary schools had library media centers in 1985 (Cahalan 1987), it may well be that public schools are now the primary agencies providing library services to young adults.

The numbers of young adults have also declined ("Preliminary Stats" 1988), but definitely have not disappeared. The survey reports that although young adults comprise only 10 percent of the population, they make up 25 percent of public library patrons ("Preliminary Stats" 1988, p. 246).

There should be no debate about which agency is responsible for library services to youth; *all* types of libraries will have to provide services and materials to meet the present and future informational, educational, and recreational needs of young adults. Working together, the library profession can help to prepare youth to live in the information age and create lifelong library users in the process.

The contributors in this issue address topics which are of vital importance to YA specialists and nonspecialists. Each author is a youth advocate which Dorothy Broderick defines as "a person who believes in creating the conditions under which young people can make decisions

about their own lives (Broderick 1979).'' The articles all reflect the authors' empathy, understanding, and concern for the youth of our society.

Judy Flum sees the necessity to gain power for youth outside as well as inside the library. Because young adults have little actual power in the institutions that govern their lives, their needs are not adequately addressed. Flum suggests strategies which librarians can use locally or at state, regional, and national levels to empower youth and the people who serve them. She also discusses the need for a national youth policy that values youth and uses their talents as well as addresses their problems.

The article by Frances Bradburn and Charles Harmon describes the steps that need to be taken by all library professionals if the services and resources needed by young adults are to be available in the future. Those steps include understanding, accepting, and communicating the needs and interests of youth.

When the library world realizes the reading and information needs of young adults, they must then make sure that young adults can access the resources that will fulfill these needs. Frances MacDonald and Doris Epler address the issue of access in the next two articles. MacDonald describes the barriers that exist in school and public libraries, both intellectual and physical. They include attitudes, policies, fees, cataloging, and preselection censorship. These barriers deny equal access to information needed by young adults. She reminds librarians "that information seeking patterns are formed during young adult years. If the library is not viewed as a place of answers, then how do adults assume that the library will be viewed as a place of answers when adulthood arrives?"

Doris Epler provides a case study which describes how one state is working to provide access to information for students. The project is called ACCESS PENNSYLVANIA and has two goals. The first is to integrate online searching into the school library media curriculum and the second is to bring schools into the state resource sharing network. Details of planning, funding, and implementation are given. This project can serve as a model for other states as they work to provide equal access to materials and information for youth.

MacDonald's article mentions that the current trend toward integrating thinking skills into school curriculums offers librarians a perfect opportunity to combine them with information skills to teach students to locate, evaluate, and utilize information. Leah Hiland agrees and recommends a new information skills and processes curriculum to replace the traditional library or research skills now being used. Combining critical thinking and information skills can provide a powerful instructional tool which will facilitate preparing young adults for the information age.

Trends in education affect libraries as well as schools. Currently there are demands from leaders in business, religion, and politics to

provide a values education for youth. Barbara Baskin, Betty Carter, and Karen Harris view libraries as institutions that can “provide materials [and] opportunities for young adults to confront and examine their own actions.” Using literature found in libraries to teach values is not a new idea, but it is a proven technique to help young adults “wrestle with moral and ethical perplexities.” The article suggests books that would be appropriate to use with students who need to find a value system of their own.

In the future, libraries must be prepared to serve a more diversified group of young adults. To accomplish this, Adela Artola Allen says we must become “ethnically literate.” Ethnic literacy is a familiarity with the body of knowledge necessary to empathize and constructively work with different ethnic groups in society. This article focuses on Hispanic young adults, the largest minority group of the next decade, and can serve as a model for literacy and library services for other ethnic groups as well. Included are characteristics, library needs, recommended services, and materials.

Since responsibility for library services to youth can no longer be assigned to any one type of library, Gerald Hodges offers suggestions which public libraries can use to plan and develop programs and services for young adults in cooperation with other libraries at the local level. After reporting on a study of factors that influence the provision of information services to young adults, he gives guidelines for preliminary planning, collection development, and evaluation.

There is every reason for youth-serving librarians and other youth advocates to feel a sense of urgency about the need for more and better library services to young adults. The library world must begin to plan and implement strategies now if they are going to be involved in a significant way in the development of an educated, well-informed citizenry of the future. It is time for another period of vitality and growth for young adult services. This time the commitment of all library professionals, not just young adult specialists, is urgently needed.

REFERENCES

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