**Introduction**

Libraries are supposed to serve their communities, but often the design and structure do not meet the needs of children and young adults. The spaces designated for them do not provide opportunities to grow and learn where they feel comfortable. Young people need to be told that they matter and can make a difference, especially in a place where the goal is provide access to information and opportunities for the creation and formation of knowledge and understanding.

**Key Questions**

- How should we design library spaces for children and young adults that makes them feel seen and understood?
- What do they need—developmentally, aesthetically, socially—in a library?
- How can we get youth involved at their libraries through design?
- How can we use design to help keep libraries relevant?

**Goals of Design**

**Supporting Literacy**

- The library is more than just books. 
- Make literacy and reading attractive through design.
- Show people that information is tangible, makeable, and doable.
- Designs related to early literacy skills:
  1. Developing vocabulary
  2. Print recognition
  3. Print awareness
  4. Narrative adeptness
  5. Letter knowledge
  6. Phonological awareness

**Responsive Design**

- Providing what kids need
  - Height and age appropriate features
  - Comfy sitting areas and more formal spaces
  - Places for them to reinforce what they are learning
  - Accommodating multiple learning and teaching styles
  - Up-to-date technology, including Wi-Fi and outlets
  - Showing that their opinions and ideas matter
  - Feels like their own space so that they participate

**Incorporating Play**

- “Literacy-packed play spaces” to get kids ready to read
- Experimental learning
- Opportunity to create
- Themes to create an immersive experience
- Serendipitous discovery

**Characteristics of the Space**

**Types of Space**

- Quiet – for contemplation
- Active – for participation
- Social – for engagement
- Transcendent space: outside the library
- Physical and digital space
- Intuitive space
- Divided by age group

**Key Characteristics**

- Flexibility: thinking about furniture and space
- Ownership and control for the kids
- Access, adaptability, aesthetics
- Welcoming
- Choice and exploration
- Interactive
- Service

**Conclusion**

**Practical Advice**

- Figure out the core purpose(s) of your library.
- What is its fundamental role?
- What you want people to feel and do in the space?
- Demonstrate the value of the library.
- Talk to your community: get the children and teens involved.
- Look at demographic trends.
- Visit other libraries for ideas.
- Take ideas from museums and other kid-centered spaces.

In conclusion, in order to create library spaces effectively designated for children and young adults, libraries need to involve youth in the development of the design and remember to be flexible. The design can and should communicate beyond simple aesthetics; it is as much about beauty as the feeling children and teens get in the space. Creativity is key in order to allow the kids to use their imagination and be able to grow socially and intellectually.

**The Library as Place**

We all have a picture in our heads of what a library looks like, but we have to remember the purpose and the community it is serving.

**The Library as a Place**

- Beautiful and functional
- Place to learn, stay, and create
- Fulfilling user needs
- Collaborative learning and community interaction

**Characteristics of a Third Place**

- Free
- Food and drink are allowed
- Accessible
- Good location for many
- Regulars can get involved
- Welcoming
- Comfortable
- Can find new and old friends
- Place to relax, feel at home, be yourself
- Allows for dialogue between diverse individuals
- Invites people in and allows them to linger
- Community of learners

**References**