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Grant Proposal

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES PROGRAM:

GRANT APPLICATION

CATEGORY: YOUTH SERVICES, AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS, HOMEWORK

HELP, INFORMATION LITERACY, LIBRARY USER INSTRUCTION

Attracting Young Adult Library Users: Educating and Encouraging Creativity

Using Digital Media

Submitted by:

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Assessment of Need

Young Adults: An Underserved Population

Young adults are the future leaders of our society. In order for them to achieve success and discover innovative solutions to current and future issues, we must encourage and support their creativity as well as their desire for knowledge and mastery. Instead of turning to the library for homework or research help, this population has come to rely on Google or other internet search engines. Although these tools provide quick and easy access to some valuable resources, there are many other information sources that can provide better quality and more relevant information. Additionally, reading books is no longer considered a fun pastime or hobby. It has been replaced by television, video games, and social media. It follows that library usage by the young adult population is meager. They may use the library due to a lack of computer or high speed internet at home, but they do not perceive the library as a place to interact with their peers and exchange ideas. We need to find creative ways to get young adults into the library in order to teach them necessary skills related to finding, accessing, and using information. A strong foundation in information literacy, will help youth reach their educational and professional goals. It will also encourage continued information literacy growth and development.

For the purposes of this proposal, the term young adult will describe youth ages twelve to eighteen based on YALSA's focus of this age group. Young adults provide a unique challenge for library service. Youth in this age group are experiencing physical and psychological changes that may affect their behavior. There are many existing stereotypes regarding this age group; they are often thought of as being obnoxious, disrespectful, destructive, and emotional to name a few choice characteristics. Perhaps this is why they are often overlooked when considering library service and programming. After all, who wants disruptive teens in the library bothering patrons? Currently, young adults account for approximately 14 percent of the nation's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). However, programming specifically targeting young adults make up only 7.1 percent of all programming at public libraries nationally (IMLS, 2011, p. 18). This highlights a gap in library service; there is a definite need for more young adult programming. In fact, a report from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development states that the real "problem" among teens is that they have too much free time on there hands: "Each day America's 20 million young adolescents decide how they will spend at least five (40 percent) of their waking hours when not in school. For many, these hours harbor both risk and opportunity." (as cited in Jones, 1998, p. 25). Libraries can seize this opportunity to reach an

underserved patron group while providing a safe space for exploration and learning.

Some may argue that programming for young adults is poorly attended that is why it is not offered as widely as children's programs, which account for 64.1% of programing in U.S. public libraries (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2011, p. 18). There are many reasons why young adult programming may not have extensive attendance, but it is the library's responsibility to know the users they are targeting and market to them appropriately. When considering this user group, the library must find creative ways to reach and attract young adult patrons. Just as stereotypes inform our opinion of young adults, their opinion of libraries and library staff are influenced by stereotypes: dull, out of touch with the times, solemn, and rigid. We must be creative when designing programming and consider topics that will appeal to young adults. We should consider leveraging technology and trends: Flip Video cameras and the latest video editing software might attract users and can easily be incorporated into information literacy instruction. Lastly, we also must use current technology to reach this audience and to market our programs and services; young adults will not become library users if they do not know what we offer.

At Anytown Public Library (APL), we are also guilty of not offering more programming for this age group. It is apparent that our community values our early literacy and children's programming so during these tough economic times, most of the Youth Services staff time and programming budget is spent on resources and planning for children's services. We do not have a designated area for young adults; they are expected to use either the children or adult areas for computer use and studying. Our young adult collection is housed in between the children and adult areas. It is a meager collection that fits on two double-sided shelves; our young adult users rely heavily on interlibrary loan. We are working on building this collection; however, we have not been successful due a decline in our acquisition budget. It is no surprise that young adult patronage at APL is nearly non-existent. APL marginalizes young adults and "designs them out of physical space" (Bourke, 2010, p. 98). Finally, based on APL's recent collaboration with local school libraries, it is apparent that the young adults in Anytown need more contact with information literacy instruction. Even those schools that have libraries with a dedicated librarian are experiencing the effects of students' reliance on Google and Wikipedia for research. There has also been a decrease in the number of students that receive their high school diploma and continue on to a college or university that correlates with the decrease in young adult library usage over the past ten years.

A Place to Call Their Own

This APL project proposes to establish a teen space in an extension built on the north side of the library. This area was the previous location of the library's four dumpsters that have been replaced with two smaller, trash compacting dumpsters. This addition will provide a space for a young adult commons area that will focus on digital media as well as provide space for growth of the print collection. This project is a considerable endeavor for APL; however, there are many advantages to starting from scratch. The ability to design a space that will meet the needs of our users as well as the teacher will enable us to thoughtfully consider every aspect in order to "facilitate deeper and richer learning" (Oblinger, 2006, p. 2.1). Easily movable furniture and retracting walls enable group work and areas that can be used for quiet study. With a focus on digital media, we can ensure that there are ample power outlets for library resources as well as for user laptops and tablets. Considerations for programming space as well as areas for gaming, performances, and audio recording will also factor into the design of the young adult area.

This project also proposes that APL expand the collection of resources accessible by young adults. The teen space will include multiple televisions, game systems, desktop computers, and laptops as well as photography, audio, and video equipment. Today's young adults are digital natives; they are comfortable and in most cases prefer digital media. Although some may view digital media as a distraction or as having a negative impact on traditional learning, APL sees this as an opportunity to motivate youth and encourage active learning through creation, sharing, and revision (Austin, 2010, 1). Information literacy instruction can be incorporated into programming that leverages technology to reach today's young adults. The most effective way to attract young adults, engage, and teach them is to utilize the tools that are part of their daily routine.

Lastly, this project proposes that APL hire a dedicated youth services librarian to focus on the young adult patron community. S/He will use social media and other creative ways to market library services to young adults. This member of the Youth Services Department will focus on designing and implementing young adult programming for APL. S/He will also serve as the digital media expert for the young adult space. It is important to have a dedicated, knowledgeable person in this role. This will ensure that APL is fully taking advantage of the space and resources outlined in this proposal. It is also integral to the achieving success in this endeavor.

National Impact and Intended Results

Model for Digital Media Centers

As more libraries embrace digital media and adjust the focus of their collections to include and promote it, a model is needed to provide direction and best practices. APL's project can serve as a case study to learn from. APL will form a committee of experts to design the young adult area; they will review the literature so as to make informed, educated decisions. This process will be documented so that other libraries are able to study our model and adapt the process to meet their needs. Since we are building the digital media center from scratch, we have a unique opportunity without restraints to work around. This information can provide a blueprint for designing and building new libraries or information centers. The information from the project is applicable to academic, school, and even special libraries in addition to public libraries. Museums may also have use for this case study when devising spaces for patrons to learn more about items exhibited or those items that are not currently on display.

Effectiveness of Digital Media in Young Adult Information Literacy Instruction

As stated earlier in this proposal, there are some that consider digital media a distraction to learning. APL's project can serve as an example that digital media not only engages the information seeker, but in some cases, may also be more effective than traditional resources and teaching techniques. As technology advances, those that provide instruction must consider how the learning landscape has changed and leverage all available tools in order to reach all types of learners. APL will continue to monitor and document young adult library usage in order to determine whether the addition of the digital media commons has increased library usage and in turn the opportunity to reach teens. APL will also continue to collaborate with area schools and document any noticeable change in information literacy relating to coursework. High school graduation rates as well as local student acceptance into a college or university will also be monitored and documented. APL's project will serve as a reminder that we must be agile to stay relevant and be effective.

Project Design

Scope

Based on APL's need assessment, we will focus on a population of underserved library patrons. This project is designed to address the unmet

needs of local young adults. As previously stated, the targeted users will be those that are twelve to eighteen years old.

Goals

1. Design and build an addition to the APL to support young adult services. The expected outcome of this goal is that a useful space is developed that meets the needs of the local young adult population. (12 months)
  • Hire youth services librarians for young adult commons.
  • Form a committee that consists of experts in: design of learning spaces, and technology, as well as the youth services librarian and department head.
  • Solicit feedback from current young adult library users.
  • Build the addition.

2. Incorporate movable furniture to promote collaboration, presentation, classroom learning, or any other situation. The expected outcome of this goal is that the library staff and users of this space can rearrange in order to meet changing needs. (to be completed while addition is being built)
  • Research possible options for furnishing the commons.
  • Solicit feedback from current young adult library users.
  • Purchase furniture. (delivered once technology is installed)

3. Incorporate technology into the space. The expected outcome of this goal is to provide young adults with a space that they are comfortable in and that appeals to them. (to be completed while addition is being built)
  • Purchase televisions, gaming systems, computers, and audio visual equipment.
  • Install equipment in the commons area. (completed once addition is built)

4. Leverage technology and resources to attract young adult patrons. The expected outcome of this goal is to increase young adult usage of the APL. (can begin immediately)
  • Market the new space using social media and other creative means to reach young adult users.
  • Highlight resources through planned programming.
  • Solicit feedback and programming ideas from young adult patrons.

5. Take advantage of teaching moments to increase information literacy in local young adults. The expected outcome of this goal is to increase the information literacy of young adult patrons. (can begin immediately)
  • Incorporate information literacy instruction into programming.
  • Incorporate information literacy instruction into daily interactions.
  • Incorporate information literacy instruction into social media and web presence.

Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation is an integral facet of this project. Not only will it gauge success, but it will also provide opportunities for improvement. Consistent and continued evaluation is also necessary to make sure that APL stays relevant to young adult users. After all, assessment and evaluation was a driving factor for this project so it may be the stimulus for future change.

1. Young adult library usage will increase.

The new space designated for teens will attract young adult users. They will begin to view the library as a place to congregate, collaborate, create, and exchange ideas with their peers. This will be measured by usage statistics, programming attendance, and circulation statistics.

2. Use of technology and social media will attract and engage young adult users.

Young adult users will come to the library to utilize the resources that APL acquires. They will create digital media and share with their peers through performance or social media. Young adults will follow and interact with APL's web presence through commenting and feedback. This will be measured and documented by APL's young adult social media profiles. Performances will be taped and posted to library's young adult YouTube channel. Both formal and informal surveys will be presented to young adult patrons and documented by library staff.

3. Local young adults will become more information literate.

Library staff will incorporate information literacy instruction through teachable moments (e.g. programming, reference interactions, pathfinders, training modules, etc.). From these instances, young adult users will develop their information literacy. This will be evident through improved performance at school, retention, increased graduation rates, and increased rate of acceptance to colleges and universities.

Project Resources

Personnel and Management

Role	Responsibility
Board of Trustees	The Board of Trustees will manage the finance of the project. They will ensure that the project stays within budget.
Design Committee	The Design Committee will be responsible for the research and design of the addition. They will also choose the General Contractor for the build.
Head of Youth Services	As part of the Design Committee, the Head of Youth Services will participate in their activities. S/He will also be in charge of hiring the Young Adult Librarian as well as supervising him/her. Additionally, s/he will compile statistics and other data relating to evaluation.
IT Staff	The IT Staff will install all technical equipment.
Library Director	The Library Director will oversee all aspects of the project and will provide support when needed.
Young Adult Librarian	As part of the Design Committee, the Young Adult Librarian will participate in their activities. The Young Adult Librarian will also be charged with ensuring that the construction stays on schedule. S/He will be responsible for the acquisition of furniture and technical equipment. In addition, s/he will maintain the young adult web presence and perform daily duties associated with the position.
Youth Services Staff	The Youth Services Staff will provide support when needed.

Dissemination

The progress and results of this project will be disseminated in several ways. The progress will be continually updated via social media tools. This includes Twitter, Facebook, library website, and blog. These communication tools will target both the local audience as well as other library professionals and advocates nationally and internationally. The Library Director will also reach out to local news outlets to build support and interest for the project locally.

The Head of Youth Services and the Young Adult Librarian will collaborate in documenting the project in a case study that will be submitted for publication in trade and scholarly journals. This will communicate the findings of the project to others in the profession looking to develop a media center at their respective libraries or those searching for creative ways to teach information literacy.

Sustainability

Since the grant will provide the initial funds to build the addition and purchase furniture and equipment, the young adult librarian's salary and the cost associated with operations of the commons are the only expenses that will need to be sustained after the grant period. The cost associated with operations of the commons will be minimal since we are intending to purchase energy efficient equipment. APL will be able to cover this additional cost by allotting additional funds to their operations budget. In order to sustain the young adult librarian's salary, APL will make changes in the budget to account for the expense. This may result in reduced staff on duty and materials budgets.

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