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While a review of the literature reveals a set of accepted standards for quality teen space design, this paper seeks to determine if public library teen spaces currently succeed in meeting these standards. Teen space design is significant not only for its aesthetic value, but for its impact on teens, who face many developmental challenges as well as a lack of safe and welcoming environments in which to experience them. Library teen spaces were examined both in theory and in practice, comparing the standards portrayed through available literature to reality. An extensive literature review was conducted, and a compendium of recommendations was used to establish a set of accepted standards. A selection of public library teen spaces was then evaluated to determine their adherence to these standards. Gaps in service were analyzed, and, finally, changes to improve service to the teen population were recommended.

Headings:

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PUBLIC LIBRARY TEEN SPACE DESIGN: AN EVALUATION OF THEORY IN
PRACTICE

by
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Introduction

As libraries evolve more and more from quiet, controlled environments to welcoming community centers, design is becoming an increasingly frequent topic of discussion. Library architecture and the design of interior spaces is no longer a purely aesthetic extra, but instead a significant consideration with impact on all aspects of library service. Where institutional practicality formerly drove design choices, new designs are often patron-centered, with the individual needs and wants of users at the forefront of space planning. The importance of addressing adult's and children's individual needs has long been upheld by library services, and this is reflected in space design. Teens, however, have historically fared less well.

In his oft-cited 1998 essay, Anthony Bernier speaks of a “long-standing spatial inequity” that “marginalizes youth and designs them out of physical space” (52). Furthermore, while almost 25% of public library patrons are young adults, he points out that they have been similarly unwelcomed in public libraries, either with nonexistent or insufficient space dedicated to their needs and activities. As Bernier states, “their bodies increasingly inhabit a geography of ‘no’” (52). This paper will attempt to show that in spite of the discussion in library and design literature, Bernier's nearly decade old remarks still stand true. While a review of the literature reveals a set of accepted standards for quality teen space design, this paper seeks to determine if public library teen spaces currently succeed in meeting these standards.

Teen space design is significant not only for its aesthetic value, but for its impact on teens, who face many developmental challenges as well as a lack of safe and welcoming environments in which to experience them. In Dr. Ann Curry and Ursula Schwaiger's 1999 article, they discuss the idea of environmental design, which takes into account the wider and deeper needs of the individuals that environments serve. Curry and Schwaiger highlight teens' needs for "places to be with friends (gathering places); places to be alone; places that reflect their identity; that teens can call their own (symbolic ownership); accessible places; unsupervised, yet safe, places" (9).

A 2006 article by Brehm Heeger provides a similar argument, focusing on the significance of teen spaces as "third spaces," or, "public and informal gathering spaces" (27) outside of the realms of home and work. Brehm Heeger points to the current lack of such spaces in the lives of teens, evident in the fact that they are attempting to replace this physical space with online environments and activities such as social networking. This concept of a third place was further discussed by Caywood, who highlights the tendency of people to "commandeer" spaces such as malls since there is a lack of more appropriate spaces today. Caywood points to the natural potential of libraries as intentionally designed third spaces to fill these gaps (138).

Beyond the over-arching goal of meeting teen developmental needs, the library as a whole also benefits from an improved teen space. An Illinois public library reported a huge spike in YA circulation after the creation of a more clearly defined YA space and an 80% increase in circulation after it moved to a new facility with a more thoughtfully designed space (Alessio 97). Additionally, a 2002 survey reported that teens surveyed selected "providing an attractive, comfortable space in the library" as the single most

important means of attracting them (Bishop and Bauer 39). Debra Burn's article looks at a newly created stand-alone teen space in Australia, and while her findings may not be able to be duplicated by libraries with greater limitations in regards to the sharing of resources, they still provide a good look at an ideal space. With a membership of over 600 teens, Burn attributes much of the success of her program to its "funky 'cool' physical space" (100).

These examples help make clear the fact that library teen spaces are important and valuable to both the patrons they serve and the libraries that house them. This paper was undertaken to establish the current state of teen space design in hopes of inspiring improvement. Library teen spaces were examined both in theory and in practice, comparing the standards portrayed through available literature to reality. An extensive literature review was conducted, and a compendium of recommendations was used to establish a set of accepted standards. A selection of public library teen spaces was then evaluated to determine their adherence to these standards. Gaps in service were analyzed, and, finally, changes to improve service to the teen population were recommended.

Methodology & Analytic Techniques

The investigation was conducted in three primary steps: an in-depth literature review and establishment of accepted best practices; data collection; and analysis and reporting of results. A variety of qualitative methods were used, but a series of case studies primarily informs the results.

Literature Review

This paper considers quality in design, which is a potentially weak measure. While much has been published about library design and teen spaces, the majority of the literature consists of singular, brief case studies and professional commentary that could be considered largely subjective in nature. Exact measures and indicators of quality are difficult to find. The power of this argument is strengthened, however, by building on the wealth of information already available through the depth and breadth of the available library and design literature.

Research for this paper first looked to the literature for recommended best practice models, with the premise that those cases featured in the standard library and design literature can be held up as models for guidance. Both their publication by respected journals and the professional and research knowledge of the authors lends weight to the personal judgments made therein. The literature review looked for a level of concordance between these judgments, giving further credence to their generalizability.

A content analysis of the literature was then conducted to evaluate and categorize the recommendations and indicators of quality teen space design. Recommendations were considered as such whether they are implicit or explicit in nature; both original thought or research and references to the thoughts or research of others were equally considered. Further, recommendations featured both in their originally published form and as referred to in the works of others were considered a separate recommendation for each instance of publication. This content analysis served to reveal primary elements of good design, as well as examples of indicators for each. These elements and potential indicators were considered as established to serve as evaluation tools for selected teen spaces.

Data Collection

Six library teen spaces in a Southeastern state were chosen to be evaluated through case studies. The sample chosen was purposive to ensure quality and generalizability of findings. Libraries were selected based on their position as the largest library in a library system with a top-ranking operating budget. This selection method was chosen as budgetary statistics were available at a system rather than branch level. Top-ranking budgets were selected to allow for cross-comparison between libraries and to ensure that libraries could be evaluated fairly based on their potential capability to provide such spaces.

Non-participant field observation was selected as the chosen method for data collection. Observation was selected rather than more people-centered methods such as surveys or interviews based on the idea that good design should be apparent visually and immediately. Library rationale behind design choices – while a potentially interesting

course for further research – is outside of the realm of this paper, which seeks to discover what should be and what is rather than why.

Data collection at each library took place over a single day, with an estimated two hours required at each location. Because observations focused on physical spaces rather than user interaction, it was not deemed necessary to standardize the day or the week or time of the observation period; it was only necessary to ensure that all aspects of the physical teen space were available for observation at the time of the visit.

During each evaluation, extensive field notes were completed, recording all aspects of the library teen space but focusing on the major categories developed through the literature review. As stated previously, observations focused on the physical space and its related elements rather than user interaction with the space. Field notes did record any interactions that were thought to perhaps provide important insight into the failure or success of the space design, however. While field notes were written with the recommendations gleaned from the literature review in mind, rater reflexivity and personal judgment were undoubtedly nonetheless influential on this segment of the evaluation.

Analysis

The final step in the methodology was analysis of the data collected through the case studies. Field notes were transcribed and analyzed for themes, common elements and significant observations. Coding techniques were used to identify categories and draw connections.

The completed analysis compares the observed library spaces to the recommendations from the literature and evaluates their success at meeting best practice

standards. The analysis seeks to point out any significant gaps as well as successes and makes recommendations for improvement based on the established quality design indicators. Analysis is largely qualitative and narrative in nature.

Literature Review

The literature on teen space design consists primarily of brief articles and case studies about successful teen space designs and redesigns, in addition to a number of more comprehensive opinion-based pieces that attempt to provide statements on best practices. Few in-depth empirical studies have been conducted on the subject. Despite variations in approach, a remarkable overall consensus on many elements of best practice teen space design can be seen throughout the literature. A review reveals nine primary categories of recommendations; accessories, color, displays, furniture, layout/location, lighting, merchandising, music, and signage are all given significant weight.

Accessories

From the literature, a miscellaneous category of recommendations is apparent, here termed Accessories. This category includes any “extras” that provide emphasis to the design but aren’t necessarily essential to it. Some relate to atmospheric elements; Kay Bishop and Pat Bauer’s teen survey reported a need for more “hip stuff” (41), while Elaine Meyers mentions a “coolness gap” between teens and libraries (42). Other articles include more specific recommendations. Kimberly Bolan’s 2006 article features a myriad of suggestions for teen space design, including fun and current accessories that will appeal to teens, such as posters and 3-D objects like plants or decorative table-top items. Her 2003 comprehensive book on teen space design written under the name Kimberly Bolan Taney recommends teen-created art as well as incorporating inexpensive

accessories inspired by teen tastes that can be easily replaced and updated. Current posters were also highlighted by Galen Cranz, Patrick Jones (1989), Renee McGrath, Sondra Vandermark and Rebecca Wenninger. In her brief article about a successful temporary teen space, Barbara Auerbach features games as a way to draw teens in, also mentioned by Carolyn Caywood and Bolan. The use of neon was brought up several times; Amy Alessio, Bolan, Angela Dove, McGrath, Vandermark and Wenninger all reference neon, either as an accessory, lighting element, or as a type of signage quickly identifiable as being teen-oriented. Jones' 2004 manual for young adult librarianship recommends fun, large-scale accessories such as a photo wall or a mural. In addition to posters, McGrath also recommends the use of large-scale murals or teen-created art features. While these recommendations are varied in scope, their primary goal is the same: making teen spaces easily identifiable and appealing to the tastes of their users.

Color

Similar to accessories, color is a slightly subtler and sometimes overlooked aspect of design. This review found a strong consensus on this element of teen space design, however. Bolan recommends avoiding drab colors such as beige or white and incorporating bright colors through wall paint or even furniture. In her later book under the name Taney, she makes a similar suggestion, also including the avoidance of conservative styles. In Gerard McCabe's Planning the Modern Public Library Building, Lesley Boon reiterates the importance of color, going so far as to consider the effects of color on the psyche. Laura Fisher Kaiser's article in Interior Design highlights the trend of the use of bold color in libraries, also mentioned by Meyers, Mary Anne Nichols, and Wenninger. In Karen Brooks-Reese's report on her successfully remodeled teen space,

the librarian remarks that the primary thing she'd change would be to include more color, perhaps in the form of a mural to brighten up a white wall. Brian Kenney's 2005 article takes a look at Charlotte's ImaginOn, one of the most respected library youth spaces in the nation, where the use of color is prominent, including in the computer stations.

McCabe (2000) and Vandermark suggest using color as an easy way to distinguish the teen space from adult spaces and the rest of the library. Jones (2004), however, while encouraging the use of color, warns against overwhelming the space with too much.

Displays

Displays are some of the most commonly accepted elements of library design, but the following articles specifically discuss the benefits of their use with teens. While brief, Anthony Bernier's 1998 article is one of the most cited pieces of literature on teen space design. His suggestion that teen bedrooms be looked to for inspiration for teen spaces and displays is mentioned again and again. The Bishop and Bauer survey ranked displays as important for attracting teens, specifically displays that reflect teen interests. Bolan recommends the element of surprise in designs, featuring unexpected items to peak interest. Michael Garret Farrelly also emphasizes the importance of displays, such as featuring high-interest books to peak teen interest. Jones (1989), McGrath, Vandermark, and Wenninger suggest the dual utility of featuring bulletin boards to post news and items of interest as well as to provide visual appeal. Regina Minudri and Francisca Goldsmith suggest that space-limited libraries take advantage of vertical space to make more room for displays, including bulletin boards and the sides of bookcases. Taney's article adds use of the ceiling for creative space use. Nichols' book on merchandising for teens

recommends point of purchase displays as well as more typical displays to attract teen patrons.

Furniture

Furniture is a major point of interest in the literature, with a large variety of recommendations for this significant element of design. Articles focus on providing comfort as well as utility. In Sheila Anderson's Serving Older Teens, Alessio recommends furniture that is durable and will accommodate teens' unique seating needs, including their habit of leaning chairs on their back legs. Bernier also mentions this habit, and suggests chairs designed to accommodate it in addition to the importance of having a variety of seating options, including space for floor seating. Teens' use of the floor for seating is further discussed by Bolan, Sally Cochran, Anne Curry and Ursula Schwaiger, McCabe (2000), and Vandermark, with common suggestions being the inclusion of beanbags and back rests. Patsy Eubanks Owens' 2002 study on teens and public spaces provides some interesting insight as well, and similarly draws attention to teens' unique seating habits, which require a variety of options. McGrath adds butterfly chairs to the list of furniture appropriate for teen tastes. Owens and Taney also focus on the importance of group seating. Cochran's article featuring a school library redesign highlights furniture intended for lounging as well as solo and group study. Taney, McCabe (2000), and Vandermark make similar suggestions. Alessio and Curry suggest round versus square tables to accommodate group work. Bolan, Curry, Kaiser, Kenney, and Taney recommend flexibility for furniture that can accommodate a variety of purposes and group sizes. The most common recommendation was for comfortable furniture; Alessio, Bishop and Bauer, Boon, Curry, Jones (2004), Kaiser, Kenney, McGrath, Meyers,

Vaillancourt, Vandermark, and Wenninger all highlight this need. Jones specifically draws a comparison to the Barnes & Noble ambience. In addition to standard seating, Bolan, McGrath, and Vandermark recommend the inclusion of items such as coffee tables and end tables. Crazz's study focuses on furniture that is physiologically appropriate for teens, who require a wider variety of seating options separate from "traditional right-angle sitting" (50).

Layout/Location

The layout and location of the teen space is another significant consideration for design. Alessio comments that noise can be an issue when teens are involved; instead of attempting to eliminate noise, she recommends designating a space where this is allowed. Potential problems can also be allayed by creating dividers to cut down on noise travel or by moving tables in the teen space further apart to keep group size down. Boon, Curry, Farrelly, Jones (2004), McGrath, Meyers, Owens, and Vaillancourt also make clear the importance of making provisions for noisier behaviors, whether by designing the space to contain it, or by locating the space in a part of the library that won't be adversely affected by noise. Caywood especially comments on the importance of facilitating and allowing conversation between teens. A clear designation of the teen area as a space of its own is also a common mandate, seen in Burn, Curry, McCabe, and Vaillancourt. Alessio as well as McGrath, Vaillancourt, and Wenninger remark that a separate teen "room" can be achieved simply by rearranging shelves, furniture, or using an inexpensive office divider to separate the area from other library areas. In addition to a clearly designated space, Bolan, Brooks-Reese, Cochran, Curry, Jones (2004), Kenney, McGrath, Meyers, Taney, Owens, and Wenninger suggest that the space itself should also have several clearly

defined sections, including areas for quiet study in addition to socialization and hanging out. McCabe (2000) specifically remarks on the importance of providing areas for group study. Location of the teen space away from the children's area was especially important, mentioned by Alessio, Anderson, Jones (2004), McGrath, Nichols, Vaillancourt, Vandermark, and Wenninger. Privacy was also a consideration for several. Alessio and Vandermark remarked on teens' need for privacy in selecting materials, necessitating careful placement of shelving to optimize this privacy. Some practical considerations such as the importance of keeping good sight lines from staff areas to all parts of the teen space were also highlighted by Alessio, Bolan, Boon, Brooks-Reese, Cochran, Jones (2004), McGrath, Nichols, and Vaillancourt. While there were many suggestions that teen spaces be located far away from service areas to prevent unnecessary noise, Taney asserts that they be located near them to provide teens access to help when needed. Vandermark suggests a location close to adult nonfiction and reference to encourage their use by teens as a supplement to teen collection.

Lighting

An emphasis on the importance of lighting appears to be a growing trend in design circles and especially important in libraries. The majority of the literature recommends a mixture of lighting elements to complement particular features. Bolan calls for "soft or full-spectrum lighting" (48) while Boon similarly suggests a variety of lights for various tasks and effects. Brooks-Reese's renovation included artificial skylights and Cochran, Jones (2004), Kaiser, and Taney all discuss the benefits of natural lighting. Cochran's renovation placed a heavy emphasis on lighting, including "mixed lighting...for pleasant, glare-free illumination" (28). In addition, Kaiser discusses indirect

lighting and homey touches such as table lamps. Dove discusses the “range of environments” (29) that lighting produces in the library. Jean Nayar’s 2007 article in Architectural Lighting looks at the significant role lighting played in one successful library redesign. Similar to previous suggestions in library literature, Nayar focuses on the use of natural light, as well as ambient, task, and indirect lighting. Table lamps were also incorporated, as well as well more playful multi-colored lighting for the teen section.

Merchandising

Because elements of merchandising often have an impact in the physical appeal of the space, much of the literature looked to merchandising as an element of library design. Face-out shelving was recommended by Alessio, Crazz, Jones (2004), Nichols, and Taney. Burn focuses on the importance of branding and the use of retail-techniques to attract teens and make them aware of the services available to them. Kaiser also points out the now common use of retail as an inspiration for design. Dove’s article was interesting in its take on library design as a whole as a marketing/merchandising tool. Patrick Jones 1989 article contains some merchandising recommendations that appear ahead of their time; he recommends face-out shelving and unique shelving techniques such as zigzag and “dump” shelving to draw teens in. Nichols makes similar recommendations. Kaiser, however, provides perhaps the most direct summation of the merchandising element: “Indeed, the biggest influences on library design are Starbucks Coffee and Barnes & Noble” (244).

Music

Auerbach’s and Burn’s recommendations for popular music to be played aloud (and loudly) may not be possible for all spaces, but the inclusion of music in some way is

suggested by Alessio, Caywood, Dove, Jones (2004), McGrath, Meyers, Taney, Vaillancourt, Vandermark, and Wenninger. Curry and Schwaiger's article particularly highlights the important role music plays in the lives of teens, suggesting that this importance be reflected in teen space design. Music can be incorporated by being played aloud throughout the teen space or by providing a CD player and set of headphones or a more formal listening station.

Signage

The most attractively-designed teen space will still be a failure if teens can't find it or use it easily. Bolan reminds that signs are important for guiding teens to materials, and should be attractive, straightforward, and jargon-free. Interestingly, this includes the use of the term YA. Jones (2004) similarly warns against jargon, and also suggests incorporating multiple languages as much as possible to aid bilingual users. He highlights the need for signs to help navigate within the space, but also to help find its location in the library. Boon's idea of signage also features broader "way finding" tools such as layout and floor pointers in addition to universally recognizable symbols. Nichols asserts that clear signage plays an important role in merchandising as well. Wenninger suggests the use of signage to designate the area as targeted specifically to teens.

Each of these elements serves as an indicator of good design. Together, they provide a platform from which teen spaces can be evaluated, their wide spread as much of an antidote to the potential subjectivity of such a judgment as possible.

Results

While field observation was conducted with the previously described indicators in mind, it became apparent that many elements featured in the sample teen spaces did not fit cleanly within the established categories; therefore, while each of the indicators will be discussed in the results section below, some overlap will be present and additional aspects of design discussed. Personal observation and reaction is paired with more objective recording for each of the teen space design elements.

Accessories

While many of the example indicators for accessories were witnessed in the examined libraries, their actual impact on the teen spaces was subtle. Visual impact in most libraries was primarily achieved through multi-functional pieces such as shelving, seating or signage rather than through the typically defined accessory. Accessories may appear to be “extras” that are hard to justify in tight library budgets; however, when they were used to good effect, accessories played the important role of both making a patron feel welcome and serving to identify the space as a teen-centered area.

The most common accessory observed in all but one of the sample libraries was wall decorations such as posters. Almost all available surfaces in Library A were covered with posters. Each open wall space as well as both ends of the free-standing shelving unit featured a different YALSA sponsored poster. Additionally, two poster frames hung from the ceiling over the shelving unit, a different celebrity “Read” poster matted on each side. This arrangement served to provide visual interest, but, along with the shelving unit, also

helped to form a “wall” for the right boundary of the teen space. Library B had a Battle of the Books poster casually taped to the side of the snack machine. Flyers were also posted slightly askew on the side of the shelving units, giving the area the casual feel of a teen bedroom, as recommended by the literature. Library F similarly had posters casually taped to the support poles, including one world map. In Library C, a colorful poster affixed to an end cap of one of the bookshelves featured the word “read” translated into different languages and written in a variety of fun fonts. The walls of Library D were decorated with a variety of posters and art. In addition to several framed “Read” posters featuring popular celebrities such as Orlando Bloom and Ice Cube, this teen space had four teen-g geared posters with inspirational messages as well as a poster advertising *Copper Sun*, a recent Sharon Draper YA novel. There were also three large-scale pieces propped against a back wall: a large reproduction of the book cover for Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, an advertisement for an Alicia Keys album, and finally a sizeable painting that appeared to be teen-created. The size of these pieces increased their impact on the space. Library D also featured a small painting hung on the wall in the collection room. This painting was an original and was possibly also teen-created art, a feature recommended by the literature.

One of the recommendations for posters was that they highlight current trends, with the idea that they are inexpensive and easily replaced for currency. Library F featured a Harry Potter poster, and the “Read” posters in libraries A and D profiled teen appropriate celebrities. A few of the celebrities highlighted appeared slightly dated, however, indicating that posters aren’t replaced often. And, while the “Read” posters are library appropriate, they might not have quite the teen appeal of standard commercial

posters. In a slightly different case, the only posters in Library E were a series of four Norman Rockwell prints. The prints were muted in color and their subject seemed unappealing for a teen space. It appeared to be a continuation of the art from the adult areas of the library rather than selected specifically for the teen space.

In three of the libraries carpeting served as an accessory, providing visual impact and interest throughout the space. Library D included a large area rug on which two couches were centered. The rug was bright in color, with an abstract music-themed design in red, blue, yellow, purple, and black. The rug was not expensive in appearance, and appeared to have likely been obtained used, but it provided a bright focal point for the room and helped divide it into distinct areas. Library E's teen space was the only library to employ carpeting to distinguish the teen space from the surrounding library. While the carpeting in neighboring sections was a basic beige, the teen space was demarked by a thick black border laid out in an irregular zigzagging starburst design. Inside, the carpeting consisted of four broad curving stripes, which alternated between red and blue. The carpeting throughout the teen space in Library F was incredibly bold in pattern and color, with bright purple, orange, green, and red patterns of stripes and swirls. In libraries A, B, and C, the carpeting was either a continuation of the carpeting through the rest of the library, or it was designed to blend in rather than stand out as a decorative statement. In all cases, carpeting was durable and functional.

More functional items also served as accessories in several spaces. A pencil sharpener was mounted to the wall in Library A, while an electric model was placed on a table in Library D. The only clear accessory in Library C was a small black wall clock with silver metal numbers in an interesting font. While functional, the clock added

interest and appeal beyond that provided by institutional-style wall clocks, such as the one featured in Library D. Library A took the suggestion box – a typically purely functional item – and added eye-catching appeal to it by covering it in a bright, fun superhero themed paper. Bulletin boards were featured in three of the sample teen spaces. While Library D’s bulletin board was an old-fashioned stand-alone model with wheels, the one in Library A was a more standard wall-mounted cork board with a light wooden frame. Library F brought a touch of whimsy to one of its bulletin boards by constructing it out of actual wine corks. A second bulletin board used to advertise upcoming events was slightly more typical, but still made out of an interesting black mesh-like material. The same library incorporated an accessory into another functional piece by inserting a chalkboard in a curved irregular frame into the side of three different shelving units. A sign on the shelving units advertised that chalk could be obtained from a staff member. The same sense of fun was evident through other accessories throughout the library, including a small basketball hoop strapped high up on a support pole.

Of all the accessories discussed in the literature, the recommended use of neon in teen space design occurred perhaps most frequently. Imagining that this particular extra might be expensive and therefore out of the reach of most libraries, I was pleasantly surprised to see a neon sign hanging outside the entrance to the teen space in Library D. Crafted in two fun fonts with blue and purple lettering, this sign was effective in drawing attention to the teen space as well as identifying it as a “cool” spot. More than the window displays or additional signage, it was this neon that drew the eye and clearly identified the teen space, a significant contribution for an area located in a sectioned off basement area.

Another common suggestion was the provision of games for teen use. A bookshelf in Library D's teen space was well stocked with a variety of board games. A game of Uno was currently underway at one table during my visit. Several signs were displayed in Library F advertising a collection of board games that could be checked out from a staff member. In addition to board games, Library D featured a Wii and a PlayStation equipped with the popular Guitar Band game. The gaming systems were hooked up to a wall-mounted television and were the center of constant activity during my visit. Library F similarly featured video game systems with a large projector screen. A pair of Dance Dance Revolution pads were installed in front of the screen. In a slight contrast to more decorative accessories, these hands-on items serve to create an inviting, entertaining atmosphere and encourage teens to spend time in the teen space.

Other libraries were unique in their accessory use. An interesting clothesline-style wire zigzagged across one wall in Library D. The wire was secured to the wall with sturdy silver bolts and featured metal clips from which pictures, posters, or flyers could be hung. While this line was mostly empty during my visit, photos of teen events were affixed to the wall nearby. Library F had a similar display of teen photos, but these were hung on a pair of tall metal mesh folding screens, each with four sections. The scale and modern design of the screens added to the impact of this accessory. While Library F did have fresh flowers placed on the staff desk, Library D was the only library to include plants as the literature recommended. In the two separate areas that made up the teen space, there were several low plants as well as taller trees. These plants warmed up the space and made it homey in appearance. Library B was a newer building, and its design was reflective of an intentional design process; this teen space featured a single primary

accessory that served to tie the space together. Hanging from the ceiling over the teen space were seven colorful metal mobiles that caught the light from the windows and acted to distinguish the space from the neighboring children's section. Also seen in Library B was a slightly less obvious accessory, but an effectual one nonetheless: a snack machine located in the center of the teen space. This standard snack machine – while not attractive or tied in with the intentional décor of the space – aided in creating a feel of comfort and welcome for always hungry teens.

Library E's teen space was distinguished by a wide octagonal column constructed of brightly dyed woods laid out in a bold zigzag design. The effect was eye-catching and appealing, but also served as the center point for a built-in surface that circled the column and housed four computers and a printing station. When I was initially looking for the teen space in this library, it was this colorful feature that drew my eye. Without the benefit of directional signs or other obvious indicators, it was this sight that implied “teen,” as it might also for other first time teen patrons unsure of their spot in the library. This design was continued on the left wall of the teen space in a wide display panel placed between two sections of shelving. The continuity served to provide positive visual impact and indicated forethought and intention in the design of the space.

Color

The use of bright colors in teen space design was uniformly recommended by the literature, and was witnessed at least in part in all observed libraries. While most libraries did not feature large-scale use of color such as the mural recommended by one article, they were able to bring in color from a variety of sources to provide visual interest and teen appeal to the space. The powerful effect of color is illustrated well by its use on a

sign in Library E. The sign was hung high on the wall, above the normal line of sight, but its use of hot pink as an accent color attracted the eye, thereby increasing its visibility.

The following examples of color use are to be considered in addition to the often-colorful accessories highlighted in the previous section, which will not be repeated here.

Furniture was observed to be a common way to introduce color. Library B featured a couch with brightly colored stripes in addition to three matching blue chairs. A bar-height table was accompanied by four chairs with bright green plastic seats. The study tables in Library E were topped with a bright red laminate and the seats and backs of the computer chairs in Library D were constructed of bright purple or red metal mesh. Library F featured a variety of colorful furniture, including bright green accents in the study booths, bright red and yellow fabric chairs, and yellow, green, and red seats and backs on the computer chairs. Several shelving units in this library were also constructed of bright green dyed wood. The gaming-style chairs used for seating in Library C were covered in electric blue and black leather. While black is not a bright color, it is modern and has a powerful visual impact in addition to its built-in sense of “cool.” Black was also used as an accent color in the metal legs of the tables and chairs in Library E and the computer tables and chairs in Library D. Library D also included a selection of cozy black leather chairs.

Color was also introduced in more subtle ways. Face-out displays and shelving allowed each of the libraries to take advantage of the often-colorful covers of the teen collection. The OPAC terminal in Library C featured a screensaver with bright, colorful cartoons, the directional signs in Library B were made of a bright modern green plastic, and in Library E, the suspended fluorescent lighting fixtures were covered with silver or

red metal covers. In a similar but more dramatic vein, Library F's lights were embedded in several large industrial looking panels crafted out of bright blue metal and suspended from the ceiling.

Materials used in the design and construction of the spaces employed color in a slightly different way. The outside facing wall of Library C was made of a natural brick. One of the walls in Library B was constructed of a light, warm wood paneling in a modern tone. All of the libraries featured shelving or furniture in various wood hues. This use of natural materials provided a sense of warmth and welcome. Clear plastic was also used in several instances, especially in the form of flyer racks, either tabletop (Library C) or attached to a wall (Library D). While not a color, the material was modern and appealing and its transparency allowed the often-bright colors of the flyers to make an impact. Additionally, Library A featured an entire eye-catching shelving unit made out of clear plastic. Silver metal was used to similar impact in several instances. The clock in Library C and the furniture legs in libraries B, D, and F all were made of silver metal. Concrete ceilings and accent walls in Library F worked to create the industrial loft feeling of the teen space.

Just as bright, modern colors were a draw in the teen spaces, the use of dated or muted colors was seen to be a detriment to overall design. The study tables in Library C were topped with a dated peach laminate surface. Similarly, the carpet in this teen space (and continuing throughout the library) was an unappealing pinkish hue. Some of the dark woods featured in the furniture in Library A also appeared dated. As described in the Accessories section, the muted tones of the Normal Rockwell prints in Library E gave the space a subdued atmosphere, detracting from the vibrant dyes used in the wood paneling.

A similar dulling impact was made by the more adult tones of the dark burgundy fabric used to cover the chairs in this space.

The literature further recommended that wall color be used as a way to distinguish teen spaces from the rest of the library. This was not seen in any of the teen spaces that directly adjoined other library areas. The back wall of Library C, which was the only paintable wall, was a peach color that continued throughout the library. Additionally, the two walls that formed the back and left boundaries of Library A's teen space were painted the same beige as other library walls. The two white painted boundary walls in Library E were bordered at the top and bottom with a nice sage green, but the same theme continued throughout the library. Library D, however, was made up of two rooms separated from the rest of the library and featured bold colors on the walls. The smaller collection room was painted a dark mauve, while the "hang-out" room featured one mauve wall, one slate blue wall, and two black walls. Library F was similarly self-contained, and featured one wall painted a vibrant orange.

Displays

While displays serve a practical purpose in increasing circulation by drawing attention to the collection, in teen space design they also provide visual interest. While the literature recommended creative displays with unexpected objects and teen appeal, for the most part, the examined teen spaces stuck to standard library book displays. The subjects of these book displays were generally appealing to teens, however, with graphic novels a popular display feature in several libraries. Aside from Library A, each of the libraries visited displayed highlighted books atop standard shelving units. Books were either partially opened and stood on their spines or supported by a variety of usually

metal book stands. Flyers advertising teen events were commonly displayed in sign holders on shelves as well. In Library F, books were also displayed on black metal stands on a side table placed between two chairs. The books appeared to be randomly chosen, without any clear connection between them.

More formal displays were also witnessed. Library C featured two display tables, one at the front of the teen space and the other towards the back. The first display table focused on Banned Books Week. A large number of books were set up face-out and signs were also posted along the base of the table that read “Flammable Material.” This display was simple, yet effective, drawing on teen interest in subversive materials. The second display table was being switched out during my visit, and so was currently empty.

Library B featured two large metal shelving units as their primary display space. A strip of foam board was attached to each side of the square units and used to tack up flyers and book lists. One of the units was located at the entrance to the teen space and included face-out display books as well as handouts and reading lists contained in binders. In addition, there were two built-in display ledges on the end-cap of one of the standard bookshelves in the teen space. These shelves were used to display teen advisory board information as well as to feature the current teen book club pick. The ends caps of the primary shelving unit in Library C also included narrow shelves on which books were displayed. While one of the displays was clearly labeled as “staff picks,” the other side was unclear and lacked signage, though it appeared the featured books may be new releases. An entire end of one of the shelving units in Library C was used for a display of poetry books. These were displayed face-out to attract attention.

The displays of teen photos in libraries D and F discussed in the Accessories section also worked as displays, though Library D could have more effectively used its unique clothesline wire to display teen art or other interesting visuals. Bulletin boards in libraries A, D, and F advertised teen events and programming. Library C displayed flyers and handouts strategically throughout the teen space as a way to attract attention. Some were placed next to the OPAC terminal while others were displayed on a four level clear plastic rack on one of the study tables. Library A placed flyers for teen programs or events in individual plastic sign holders on the study tables. In addition, a small square table placed in between two shelving units was used for reading lists, flyers, and a suggestion box. Library D grouped some flyers together in a clear plastic rack hung on the wall, but also had other flyers and booklists casually laid on top of shelving units or spread out on study tables. In general, each teen space visited used flyers and handouts that were eye catching and designed with teen tastes in mind. They were printed on colorful paper or included bright graphics and most featured fun, modern fonts.

Library F did feature one unique display, which appeared to be part of a temporary installation promoting recycling. Two full-size armchairs and a matching side table had been created out of the pages of recycled phone books. They appeared to be intended for use and were accompanied by an explanatory poster featuring pictures documenting their creation by teen patrons. Another more simple, though equally creative display centered on the suggestion box in Library A. Suggestions from the box were responded to by the librarian, and then displayed on a bulletin board above the table. This was a creative way to let teen patrons know that their concerns and requests

were being listened to while preserving patron anonymity. Library D similarly posted a “wish list” on a bulletin board that teens could use to record requests.

The literature recommended the libraries maximize their display area by utilizing vertical space as well as the sides of shelving units, in addition to the obvious wall and table space. Library A, which was limited in space as well as available display surfaces, took full advantage of this potential. This teen space hung posters from the ceiling in addition to affixing them to the sides of the stand-alone shelving unit. Library B similarly used vertical space in its hanging of mobiles as well as in the placement of posters on the sides of shelving units.

Library D took advantage of a plate glass window separating the teen space from a lobby area and used this as a display surface that could be seen by any library patrons walking by. A large, hand-drawn cartoon was affixed to the window, along with the words “Morph 2 Change.” The cartoon appeared to be related to a more standard display of books set up below, and was evidently drawn by teens, who were thanked in a smaller sign below the cartoon. This large window was flanked on the right by a narrower window, which framed three glass shelves lit from above. Each shelf featured a small display highlighting a different summer book club.

Not all displays were successful, and this was a particular weakness for Library E. One of the major distinguishing features of this teen space was a built-in display wall located between two shelving units. The use of the same colorful dyed wood as was used with the octagonal pole described earlier indicated that it was intended to be a focal point of this teen section, and yet as a display area, it appeared underused. Built into the wood paneling were a series of five display ledges culminating in a narrow desk surface. A

colorful sign at the top of the wood paneling further drew attention to the area. Despite the attractiveness of the design, this element of the teen space appeared underused. There were only a few books placed on the shelves in addition to a separate few placed on the desk surface. The intention or purpose behind this collection of materials was unclear, and not indicated by the sign. There was a sense of abandonment to the entire area.

A second disappointing display was located outside of the actual teen section. The display advertised the library's graphic novel collection, which was housed in the teen section, and consisted of a small tabletop display set up near the circulation desk. Several example books were placed on stands and a sign was also displayed, though the teen space itself was never mentioned. This incorporation of a display into other areas of the library is an interesting idea. For the purposes of this evaluation, however, this particular display was unsuccessful in drawing attention to or adding to the impact of the actual teen space. Rather, the display seemed to be targeted towards adults who might be interested in using the collection.

Furniture

While the literature mostly focused on furniture designed for or around seating, my observations showed that shelving units were also often used to impact teen space design, and so will be discussed in this section as well. Though a shelving unit's primary function is one of utility, decorative elements were occasionally incorporated to add visual interest to the piece. These elements usually were unique to the teen spaces, and served to distinguish it from other areas of the libraries. Often, the shelving units highlighted below were accompanied by more standard library shelving, which will not be discussed.

The single most eye-catching element in Library A was actually a pair of zigzag shelving units. Anchored to the left and back walls, these units were constructed of a sturdy clear plastic and designed in vertical sections of shelves that came out diagonally into the room. The books in the front of each section were shelved face-out, taking advantage of the colorful covers while the spines on the sides were still visible and browse-able. Library B incorporated two large silver metal shelving units used for display and to house audio books. The units were around six feet tall and square, with open shelves on each side. The design was reminiscent of lockers and very teen appropriate. The paperback collection in Library B was stored in a series of spinner racks connected by a light wooden support structure that was also laid out in a zigzag shape. Each section of the unit supported one spinner, which was made out of clear plastic. The remainder of the paperback collection was housed in two similar matching wooden units, each a large square shape with a spinner rack on each corner. About five feet tall, these shelving units formed the left “wall” of this teen space. More typical spinner racks were also seen in libraries A and D. The paperbacks in Library E were kept in an attractive modern black metal rack with four spinners. In Library F, standard black metal two-sided four-shelf units were embellished with bronze-colored end caps with circular cutouts. Three large square shelving units were also located towards the back of this teen space. These units were made of a bright green dyed wood and had shelving on the two open sides, with one end placed against the wall and the other facing towards the room. This end featured a curved inset chalkboard as discussed in the Accessories section.

A strong consensus was found in the literature on the need for comfortable seating in teen spaces. Though couches were highly recommended, only libraries B and D

actually incorporated them in seating areas. The couch in Library B was small and low in profile to fit well in the limited space. Covered in a brightly colored striped fabric, it was modern in design with silver metal legs. Facing the striped couch were two similarly styled blue fabric armchairs. A round modern coffee table with silver metal legs was placed in the middle of the grouping. Library D included three couches. While dated in style, the couches were the most comfortable-looking of the furniture seen and added to a basement “rec room” feeling in this teen space. Each couch was covered in blue fabric, and two of the couches had light wooden accents on the arms. One of the couches was set up against the right wall, and the other two were arranged auditorium style facing a wall-mounted TV. Though without a couch, two seating areas in Library C were each formed by a circle of five low gaming-style chairs with a lot of teen appeal. The rockers sat directly on the floor and were covered in a leather-like material, one group in electric blue and one in black. Each of the circles was centered on a large, low blue upholstered square that could be used as a table, footrest, or extra seating.

Other libraries focused on individual seating. The collection room in Library D included small armchairs scattered throughout. Several black leather chairs were striking in their stylish modern design. In addition, there was a bright red fabric covered chair with a silver metal base. Six small chairs lined the back wall in Library E; covered with a dark burgundy fabric, each had light wooden arms and black metal legs. Though modern in design, the chairs did not appear to be comfortable and were instead rather formal in posture. A small light wooden side table was placed between two sets of these chairs. Library F’s primary seating consisted of numerous high backed armchairs with modern appeal scattered throughout the space. The chairs were covered in a salmon-colored

fabric with purple and yellow dots and appeared very comfortable and welcoming. Several were placed next to small side tables with light wooden tops in a triangular shape supported by black metal legs.

Most libraries fared well in providing ample table seating for studying. Library C provided three large study tables with four chairs each. While the tables themselves were dated in both their wood tone and in the peach laminate that topped them, they were functional and durable. Additional study tables were also available adjacent to the teen space. Library D featured three different kinds of study tables. There were three modern round silver metal tables with four matching chairs with mesh metal seats and backs at each, two located in the lobby directly outside of the teen space and the third in the activity room. Also in the activity room were four more standard rectangular study tables. Constructed with black metal legs and blue laminate tops with wooden trim, each table was surrounded by four wooden straight-backed chairs with purple fabric seats. Two more round bar-height tables in a similar style with two chairs each were also placed throughout the space. Library E included two large rectangular study tables with red laminate tops with light wooden trim and black metal legs. Four chairs with light wooden seats and backs and black metal legs surrounded each table. Silver metal bar-height tables with two metal chairs with clear plastic seats and backs were scattered throughout the teen space in Library F. Library B only provided a single small study table. The table was attractive and modern, however, and was bar-height with silver metal legs and a white top with four chairs with bright green plastic seats and backs. Library A did not include any seating in the small teen space itself, but two standard large wooden study tables with four chairs each were located directly in front of the space.

Library F featured perhaps the most creative and appealing seating element. In addition to the bar tables mentioned above, group seating and study spaces were provided through three study booths. Each booth was installed against the left wall and enclosed on the left and right sides by a full wall with a large inset glass window, which preserved sightlines while controlling noise and providing a measure of privacy. The front end of each of the booths was open to the room. Two smaller single table booths book-ended a larger area in the middle containing two study tables surrounded on three sides by a banquette-style bench. Each booth featured brown leather benches with patterned green fabric backs. The tables were black metal with light brown wood tops and were placed on casters to facilitate easy movement. The design was interesting, modern, and appealing to teen tastes.

Computer stations were another furniture element seen in several libraries. Library D had four computers placed along the left wall of the activity room. Each of the computers was stationed on its own desk, which were compact and constructed of black metal. The computer chairs had black metal bases with metal mesh seats and backs in either purple or red. The four computer stations in Library E were set up on a built-in desk ledge surrounding the octagonal pole centerpiece. The desk was made of a simple light wood with a black laminate top. The computer chairs had black metal legs and light wooden seats and backs. Library F included eight computers, all placed on a large desk with four stations on each side. The desk was designed in a waved shape, with each computer set up at the inset of one of the curves. The desk was black metal with a light wooden top. Computer chairs in libraries D and F were both functional and eye-catching with their brightly colored plastic seats and backs.

Other creative furniture elements were seen as well, with Library F particularly succeeding in this category. A creative solution for magazine storage was one such observation. Current issues were opened and hung over two black metal rods. Two levels of low dark wooden shelves were set up below the rods to store back issues. The staff desk in this teen space was also particularly striking. The desk, located in the center of the teen space and arranged so as to not create any barriers between staff members and teens, was bar-height and oval in shape. The top was a simple black, but the bottom of the desk was made of a white translucent plastic that was lit from within. This drew attention to the desk and also gave it a sense of playfulness that might encourage teens to approach the staff member for assistance. Perhaps the most creative use of seating seen among the sample set was the recycled phone book chairs previously described in the display section, also in Library F. Library D also featured a unique fixture with its built-in stage at the back of the activity room. The stage was two steps high, and featured a ramp on the right side for wheelchair access.

While most libraries featured a variety of seating options, including both comfortable furniture and study tables as well as group and individual arrangements, other recommendations were not as clearly fulfilled. Floor seating was recommended by several articles but, aside from the gaming chairs in Library C, was largely absent in the observed libraries. Each of the teen spaces was carpeted, but the carpet was institutional and durable and didn't lend itself to floor seating. Library D did have a large black leather pillow behind the staff desk that could have been intended for floor seating, but it wasn't apparent during my visit whether or not it was available for teen use or not.

Another consideration for furniture design largely absent in the teen spaces was the unique seating needs of teens, who like to sprawl and lean back in their chairs. Furniture was largely standard in size and posture, requiring teens to sit up straight rather than encouraging more relaxed positions. Again, the chairs in Library C were most successful in this element, with their rocking capability. Furniture was largely durable, however, and designed for heavy use by teens.

Layout/Location

Layout and location proved to be a significant factor in teen space design success. Because two of the observed libraries varied so greatly from the rest in these areas, they will be discussed separately below in order to ensure fair comparison.

While limited by building design, each of the libraries was successful in creating a dedicated space for the teen section, many incorporating the recommendation of using turned shelving to create walls where none exist. Libraries A, B, and E were each located in a corner of their building, with walls on two sides and a shelving unit forming a third “wall” with the front remaining open. Also located in a corner, Library C’s teen space was distinguished from the rest of the floor’s open floor plan by a series of shelving units that acted as the left and front boundaries of the space. In addition to physical boundaries, teen spaces were distinguished from surrounding areas by variations in design and fixtures. This was a weakness for Library B, however. Aside from the mobiles and the signage hanging above the space, there was nothing in terms of décor that really distinguished this teen space from the rest of the room. The color scheme was modern and young and worked well in the teen space, but it carried throughout the library.

Again, building and space limitations prevented several libraries from effectively dividing teen spaces into the recommended separate areas for quiet study and socialization. Most libraries did manage to provide for a variety of activities through their layouts, however. In Library B, the small teen space was divided into two primary areas: rows of shelving units to house the collection, and an open area with seating. There was a single study table and one grouping of more casual seating appropriate for socialization, but these were adjacent to one another. Shaped like a long narrow rectangle, Library C contained areas for study and socialization, though they were also close in proximity. Tables were located to the right of the space along a wall of windows, taking advantage of the natural light. Two seating areas were located toward the back left of the space. The variety of options ensured teens would be able to find a comfortable place to study or hang out. With shelving units spread around the boundaries of Library E, the remainder was divided into study and seating areas, with a round computer desk in the center serving as a room divider. Large study tables were located in the front, while armchairs were located in the back in front of the windows.

Library A was the only teen space visited without separate areas of some kind. Without any seating areas inside the teen space itself, the area was arranged purely for browsing the collection. Study areas were available directly outside the space, but there was no provision for noise or group activity. The fiction room in which it was located was a quiet space that didn't appear to invite teen socialization of any kind.

A major recommendation from the literature was that teen spaces be located away from children's sections of the library so as to not identify them as closer in stature to children than adults. While some libraries did well in associating teens with adults rather

than children, other designs were negatively impacted by their close proximity to children's areas. The teen spaces in libraries A, D, and E were very distinct from their libraries' children's sections, with one on a separate floor and the other on the other side of the building. In Library C, the children's section was located on the same floor and nearby the teen space, but in a space jutting off from the building and separated from the rest of the room by a series of arches. Despite its close proximity, noise didn't carry over into the teen space or otherwise disrupt teen comfort. The adult fiction section was also located on this floor on the opposite side of the teen space, preventing any possible children/teen associations due to the location. While Library A was located two floors away from the children's section, a play mat and box of toys was located near the teen space, presumably to entertain children while their parents browse for books. This location so close to the teen section would not be appealing to teen patrons and negated some of the benefits of having the children's section on a separate floor.

Library B's teen space placement was particularly troubling. This teen space shared a room with the children's collection while the adult and reference collections that teens might need to make use of were located across the lobby or upstairs. The children's area was significantly larger than the teen space, with teens only reserved a small corner of this sizeable room. A giant caterpillar hung over the children's space, and immediately drew the eye upon entering the room, identifying the area as children's-oriented. In the middle of the room was a grouping of study tables, but these tables were child height in size. Additionally, a bank of four OPAC stations was placed directly ahead of the entrance to the room, but these too were placed on child-size desks with low chairs. Behind these was a bank of similarly low computer stations below a sign that identified

them as “Children’s Computers.” Teens were not provided computers of their own, meaning that if a teen needed to look something up, they would have to go to another area of the library or suffer the embarrassment of sitting in a child-size chair. In addition, noise from the children’s section was clearly heard throughout the teen space, a constant reminder of its location. Both teens and children were given a display table on either side of the entrance, however, placing equal importance on the collections in at least this way.

The small size of most teen spaces made it difficult for them to ensure that teens had privacy in selecting materials, as recommended by some of the literature. Only libraries B and F had the space to arrange shelves in parallel rows to provide privacy while browsing. Though the shelving units in Library B were arranged in rows, the last section of the teen collection shared a shelving unit with the beginning of the children’s collection. This meant that teens searching the non-fiction section to meet an informational need would have to first walk past picture book displays and share the aisle with small children and their parents. Any privacy provided by the arrangement of the rows was therefore negated. The remainder of the libraries arranged shelving along the boundaries of the space, which helped create walls, but also required teens to conduct their searches in the middle of the space with limited privacy.

While designated, private areas were recommended for teen spaces, the provision for clear sightlines was another important concern to allow staff members to monitor teen behavior. Sightlines were clear throughout Library A’s space, but its location recessed in a corner behind the fiction desk still gave the space a sense of privacy. In library B, the parallel arrangement of the shelves as well as the open front end provided for good sight lines into all areas of the teen space from the staff desk. It was far away enough however,

to allow teens to retain a sense of privacy and dedicated space. While the shelving units on Library C's left boundary were tall, the open structure and distance between spinners ensured it didn't act as a visual barrier. The units at the front of the space were either waist height or positioned parallel to the entrance so as not to block sight lines. In addition to the provision of good sight lines, a curved security mirror was installed in the back right corner of the room to allow staff members to see into the area from a distance. Not to be taken as a statement of distrust for teens, these mirrors were installed in other areas of the library as well.

The only poor performer in this category was Library E, which had several rows of tall shelving units acting as walls, but also blocking visibility into the space from staff areas. The right boundary of the teen space was relatively open, but this boundary joined with an area that was labeled as the Large Print and Senior Resource Center. This would allow noise and teen behaviors to carry over into this senior section. The close proximity of senior citizens may also make teens uncomfortable. This arrangement led to a teen space with little supervision or feeling of staff involvement, and yet also little privacy from other areas of the library.

While the literature recommended that teens be given their own dedicated space in the library, it was also considered important that they be located to give teens easy access to other library resources, such as the reference collection or staff desks. Most libraries fared well with this consideration. Library A was located on the third floor of the library inside the fiction room, which it shared with the adult collection. The library's non-fiction and reference collections were located on the floor directly below. A fiction desk was placed at the entrance to the fiction room, with the teen space just beyond it to

the left in a corner set back from the room. This location gave teens the benefit of the adult collection, as well as the stature of being associated with adults rather than children. Also located between the fiction desk and the teen section was a computer station labeled the “Browser’s Corner” that included OPAC access as well as electronic reader’s advisory tools. Located directly to the right of the main lobby, Library B’s teen space was given a prominent location at the front of the library with the benefit of a large wall of windows looking out into the front parking lot. This position would allow non-driving teens to watch for their ride. In addition to the vending machine in the teen space itself, this space was also in close proximity to a coffee and snack stand located in the lobby. A service desk was located directly across from the teen space, which featured circulation as well as reference and reader’s advisory services. A self-checkout station was also available. Library C was located on the second floor of the library in the back right corner. It shared the open floor with the adult fiction collection as well as the library’s music collection. The placement of the adult fiction section near the teen section would also allow teens to take advantage of this collection in addition to their own for their reading needs. The library’s CD collection, located in low shelving directly in front of the teen space, also seemed like a natural fit considering teens’ strong interest in music. An information desk was situated close to the entrance to the teen section as well, making staff members available for assistance without being overly obtrusive. Bathrooms were located directly across the room in the front of the library, and a water fountain was installed in the back of the teen space. Library E was located on the first floor of the library to the left of the entrance on the same side as the adult fiction collection. The teen section was located near circulation and staff areas in the lobby, as well as near the

pertinent adult fiction, DVD, and periodical collections that might interest them. Also available in the outer lobby was a coffee shop and restrooms.

The unique layouts and designs of two of the teen spaces deserve particular attention. Located in a basement area of the library, Library D's teen space consisted of two separate rooms. The entrance to the space led into a long narrow room that contained the teen collection, and beyond this, through two double glass doors, was a large open room designed for activities and hanging out. The entrance to the collection room was off a short hallway to the left. While there was no door enclosing the area, a wall with a large glass window along the front did separate the space and enclose noise while allowing for sightlines into the space. The collection room was lined with shelving units on the front and side walls, with two standalone round units in the middle. Several chairs were also placed against the wall and could be used for quiet reading or individual study in this room, the quieter of the two.

The activity room was designed with several distinct areas, but it was definitely a noise-friendly room without designated quiet areas. Study tables were located at the front of the room, and couches were located at the back. Computers were set up along the side of the room, spread out from each other enough to provide teens privacy. Several tables and chairs appeared to have been casually moved to fit a current need, indicating that teens felt comfortable making the space their own. Accessible only through the collection room, this activity room felt very private and removed from the rest of the area, giving teens a sense of privacy and freedom. While the separation of the rooms made clear sightlines throughout difficult, a staff office was located off the collection room, and a

staff desk was placed directly at the entrance to the activity room, providing supervision of teen activity. The adult presence didn't feel oppressive, however.

The basement location was both a benefit and a detriment for this teen space. While it was far away from the adult and reference collections that teens might need to make use of, the dedicated space and basement location made the space the teens' own. The basement also had its own entrance as well as a circulation desk, so teens weren't far away from library services. The main floor of the library did have a nice atrium area with coffee and vending machines, however, that the teen space was separated from.

At the end of a long winding ramp that lead up from the lobby of the building, Library F's teen space was designed as a loft, with railings on the right and back boundaries open to the spaces below. Industrial touches including a concrete ceiling and accent walls as well as hanging metal panels helped further this image and create a fun space for teens. Library F benefited from having a large space to work with, but careful design and space planning also helped create a successful layout.

The layout was informal, creating a sense of comfort and welcome. Perhaps best exemplifying this was the positioning of the staff desk, which was situated in the middle of the space directly to one side of the primary path of traffic. The desk was set up with two chairs placed to the traffic side of the desk, one for the staff member and one presumably for a patron. This acted to encourage casual, equal communication and avoid any barriers placed between staff members and teens. Staff offices were located directly off of Library F's teen space as well, and it appeared to be staffed by several individuals at all times. Because of the high level of adult presence throughout space itself, the provision of clear sight lines was slightly less important for this library than for others.

Still, however, while teens would be able to find private spaces if needed, the layout was open and retained visibility to most areas.

A large circular room located two thirds of the way through Library F acted as a divider, creating a smaller, quieter area to the left and back of the room. Though there were no noise or activity regulations in this teen space, the smaller room's location made it a natural fit for quieter behaviors, while the noisier sections featuring computers, gaming systems, and group seating areas were located in the front portion of the space. The gaming area was also carefully located so as to contain as much noise as possible. It was placed in a large open area between several sets of shelving units, which, along with a tall standalone projection screen, formed "walls" on three sides that gave gamers a sense of privacy in addition to the noise containment. Various chairs and tables were scattered through the space, creating plenty of opportunities for teens to hang out in groups or individually, finding quiet or social areas to meet their needs.

While Library F benefited from an exceptional overall design and layout, its location at the top of a ramp that first meandered through an extensive children's library was less positive. In order to reach their designated space, teens must first walk through spaces heavily oriented towards young children and full of noise and commotion. The children's section took up the majority of the library space, while the teens were reserved a smaller area at the top of the building. Because the teen space was designed as a loft with open railings looking down over the rest of the library, noise from the children's areas could be heard throughout the teen space, and was especially noticeable in the smaller quiet room toward the back. Because the library itself was a purely a children's

and teen library, this also meant that teens didn't have the benefit of an adult collection nearby.

Lighting

Thoughtful lighting schemes is an emerging trend in library design, but one that most libraries visited didn't achieve. Standard fluorescent lighting was the primary source of artificial lighting for all libraries. While the fixtures for libraries A, C, and D, were the institutional variety installed in drop down ceilings, several libraries featured more stylish designs. Library B's lights were suspended from the ceiling in long, white metal covers that directed the light upwards, taking away from some of the potentially harsh glare of direct fluorescent light with this indirect lighting method recommended by the literature. Library E featured a similar lighting system, but with alternating silver and red metal covers instead of white. The lighting for Library F was built in to a series of large blue metal panels suspended from the high concrete ceiling. These lowered panels served to make the large, open space warmer and cozier.

Recognizing the importance of natural lighting was commonly referenced as an emerging trend in lighting design. Library C was one of the few older buildings visited that successfully incorporated natural lighting. The right wall of this teen space was lined with large windows, providing a nice view of trees and a small stream in addition to most of the daytime light. Dated vertical blinds were installed in the windows to control the brightness if necessary. In the newer constructed libraries B and E, the teen spaces featured a back wall of windows at the front of the building facing either the street or parking lot. In addition to the natural light that this provided, this arrangement would allow teens to watch for rides to arrive. Library B's wall was constructed of floor to

ceiling windows providing the majority of the light in the space, while Library E's windows were sizable, but smaller. The natural lighting in this teen space was supplemented with fluorescent lighting. While the collection room of Library D did feature a small window to the outside, the blinds were lowered and closed during my visit, preventing any daylight from reaching the space. With the right street-facing wall of Library F primarily constructed of glass, natural light served as the primary lighting source for this teen space. In addition to the views provided by the expansive windows, the natural lighting helped the space avoid the institutional feeling of so many libraries.

Few libraries included any additional lighting other than their primary light sources. No table lamps or task lighting was witnessed as recommended. A display shelf in Library D did include several recessed lights to provide a spotlight on the display, however. The stage in this library was also lit by a series of spotlights installed on a track on the ceiling. Library F also featured additional indirect lighting along the curved wall toward the back of the teen space. The round fixtures were made of silver metal and complemented the industrial, loft atmosphere of the space. A second unique lighting element in Library F was seen in the staff desk discussed in the Furniture section above. In this case, lighting was used for decorative effect rather than function. The lighting hidden behind the plastic bottom of the desk created a warm, bright glow that attracted the eye. In attracting teens to the staff desk, this lighting element was a good example of the benefits creative and carefully planned lighting schemes can have on a teen space.

Merchandising

The use of retail techniques in merchandising has been a hot topic for public libraries, and one that was reflected in all of the libraries visited. However, while touches

inspired by merchandising theory were evident, none of the teen spaces fully reached the full “Barnes & Noble” model that some of the literature recommended. Nearly all libraries incorporated face-out displays in some manner, though most often through the occasional standard tabletop or shelf-top displays rather than integrated in the shelving of the collection as a whole. Libraries C, D, E, and F highlighted books on special display units or on top of standard shelving, sometimes as a thematic group tied together with an explanatory sign and other times as just a collection of interesting or recommended books.

Additionally, several libraries featured a limited amount of face-out shelving alongside standard spine-out shelving. The shelf displaying magazines as well as manga and graphic novels in Library A was designed with slanted shelves for face-out display. These collection elements were common candidates for face-out display in libraries due to their appealing, colorful covers. Magazines in Library E were also displayed in this way and Library F’s graphic novel and manga collections were housed in a series of green shelving units with a mixture of standard shelves and slanted shelves designed for face-out display. The first section of one of the shelving units in Library B was used to display face-out books in addition to reading lists and read-alike handouts. Periodically other upper sections of shelves were also used for face-out display. A raised section in the middle of the primary shelving unit in Library E created two additional shelves used for face-out display. Zigzag shelving or spinner racks in libraries A, C, D, and E also allowed for some book cover impact.

Library C was particularly successful with merchandising its teen collection. While the majority of the collection was housed in standard shelving, one shelving unit

was dedicated to highlighting certain portions. One side of this unit featured the manga collection, a portion of which was face-out. Though the size of the collection and lack of shelf space prevented all of it from being displayed this way, other creative methods such as stacking were used to introduce more of the bookstore approach to shelving rather than the formal, spine-out library standard. The other side of this shelving unit featured a display of poetry books, which were shelved entirely face-out. Additionally, one end cap of the unit was taken up by a display of staff favorite books. Each book had a hot pink bookmark in it marking it as a favorite, a tactic often seen in bookstores and video stores.

Other merchandising tactics were also implemented. In an attempt to advertise Library E's graphic novel collection, a display was placed on a small table near the circulation desk where patrons who might not have known about the collection would likely see it. This tactic is reminiscent of register displays commonly seen in bookstores. Also echoing commercial design, Library D took advantage of the window in the front wall of the teen space to create a window display to attract patrons passing by. Flyers, handouts, and booklists in libraries A, C, and D were placed strategically throughout each space, displayed through standard methods such as bulletin boards or stands, but also laid on top of tables or on a shelf next to an applicable portion of the collection where they might more readily catch a teen's eye. In Library C, small flyers advertising an anime club were placed on an empty spot of one of the shelves housing manga. Library F also used small display signs to advertise library services that might have gone unnoticed, such as upcoming library events or a collection of board games available upon request.

Music

Libraries performed most poorly in providing for music in teen spaces. No libraries featured music played aloud or provided listening stations for teen patrons. The only music elements heard in any of the teen spaces came from video game systems being used by teens in libraries D and F, which featured the music-based Guitar Band and Dance Dance Revolution, respectively. Music was addressed more indirectly in two libraries, however. Library B's teen space was located directly behind the library's CD collection, and Library D's collection included a sizeable selection of teen-friendly music for check-out.

Signage

The literature recommended clear signage to both identify the space ensure that users are able to find it within the library. Several of the libraries met this indicator well, and featured signage that was straightforward and direct. Libraries A, B, and C all featured clear signage at their main entrance directing users to the teen space. In addition to the sign in the main lobby directing users to its second floor space, Library C featured a sign hanging over the space itself that simply read "TeenSpace" and was clearly visible from the floor's entrance. This was a use of branding that was clear and effective. The sign was blue/green in color, written in a clear font, and consistent with the style of the signage throughout the library. While a sign in the lobby of Library A as well as a sign directly outside of the fiction room clearly directed patrons to "Teen Fiction," no sign hung within the room. This library instead relied on the décor and unique furnishings of the space to distinguish it from the adult section of the room.

Library B's signage was similarly consistent with the rest of the library, and written in a modern font in a bright, eye-catching green color. Hung directly over the space, it also helped distinguish this area as a teen space where the colors and décor did not. This library did suffer from lack of consistency in its signage, however, that might lead to confusion. The primary sign hanging over the space read "Young Adult" and below that, "For Middle School Readers." On the end caps of the shelving units, the teen collection was marked with a smaller but similarly designed sign that read "Young Adult Authors" and "Teen Readers." The target age group of this space seemed unclear, and the use of both "young adult" and "teen" terminologies was confusing, especially since the primary sign indicated that the space was for middle schoolers, not teens.

Other libraries were slightly less successful with directional signage. Library D's teen space was very clearly marked at its entrance, but there was no indication at all from the main floor of the library that a teen space even existed. Its basement location made it even more difficult to locate when entering from the main floor because the stairwell leading to the basement wasn't clearly marked. The signage outside the space itself was very clear and effective, however. This teen space was the only one to feature a neon sign, which incorporated the branding of the space and read "Teen Central." Hung on the wall directly outside of the teen space, the bright neon was immediately visible and the branding clear. A second sign hung over the hallway outside of the entrance to the space. Constructed out of inexpensive poster-sized foam board, the printed message included the name of the space along with a slogan and an interesting, appealing graphic. A simple computer generated sign on the door to the activity room also stated the hours and rules for this space, which was only open after school and in the evening.

Library E's lack of signage throughout the library had me wandering around both floors before finally finding the teen space back on the first floor. Upon entering the library, the only section that was clearly identifiable was the children's room due to its large-scale walk-through entrance. The teen space itself did have a few identifying signs, though these were ineffective due to size or lack of clarity. A large attractive sign hung above a display wall on the left side of this teen space. The sign was eye-catching in design, made of wood and glass with green and hot pink accents, but was hung too high for it to be immediately visible. The sign read "Future Time," though whether that was the branding of the teen space or just the display area was unclear. One sign printed on a standard size sheet of paper said "Young Adult" and was kept in a sign holder on one of the shelves of a bookcase. Already not easily spotted within the shelving unit, this sign was computer generated, printed in black and white, and in a basic font that didn't increase its ability to catch the eye. This sign was only visible while within the teen space, at which point the collection and other elements would have already identified it. A second similarly sized sign was placed on top of a shelving unit among a collection of display books at one of the possible entrances to the teen. This sign clarified that the teen space as a whole was known as "Future Time" and further identified it as a "Career Resource Center." Aside from one book placed on the desk surface underneath the large sign, however, enactment of this mission wasn't evident.

There was a lack of clear signage directing to the teen space in Library F as well. Though I instinctively walked towards the top of the ramp, it wasn't until I was halfway up that I saw a sign directing to the teen space. This sign, however, referred to the space only as "The Loft," a branded name with no obvious, immediate indication of its target

audience. The name of the space was written in the same font and style as the other locations on the sign, giving no clue as to its meaning in this way either.

An interesting sign positioned at the entrance to Library F finally did explicitly state the mission of the space. A large sign placed in a stand stated that the space was only for teens between the ages of 12 and 18, and that children and adults were forbidden from entering. Library D had a similarly stated policy, but did allow children and adults under some circumstances. Two small framed signs posted at the entrance to its collection room stated: “Teen Central houses the Young Adult Collection of books, magazines & CDs. Everyone is welcome to browse the collection, BUT Adults and Children must be accompanied by a TEEN to stay and hang out in Teen Central.” These two examples were perhaps the most powerful of all the signage encountered. While clearly identifying the area, they also gave teens ownership of the space and exemplified the value the libraries placed on them.

Analysis

Analysis of the results of the observation of the six library teen spaces indicated that strides are, in fact, being made in teen space design in public libraries. Each of the libraries featured a dedicated teen space of some kind, with some unique, teen-friendly fixtures to provide added appeal in addition to distinguishing them from other library areas. While at least some libraries performed well in most categories, there were definite weaknesses and room for improvement witnessed, however.

An on-level comparison between the evaluated teen spaces is difficult due to the variances in age and funding of each library building. Teen spaces in older libraries were burdened with often-dated infrastructure, while new construction benefited from more modern designs and design principles. Nonetheless, a slightly more subjective indicator can be added to those already discussed above that in part rectifies the age and funding disconnects between libraries: intent. Intent is defined here as a library's motivation to encourage the feeling of respect and welcome that pervades a teen space designed with teen interests and needs in mind. This intent was made evident through a variety of methods, represented at times by particular success with one or more of the indicators, but more generally identified by the overall atmosphere of the teen space.

Over the course of the observation, it became evident that the libraries that appeared more successful in the implementation of their teen spaces didn't always boast the newest furniture or the highest quality materials. While an updated, thoughtful design such as that in Library F reflects a clear prioritization of teen needs, more limited libraries

managed to convey this intent just as successfully, despite facilities designed without the benefit of current design theories. In the case of Library C, fixtures such as the tables and carpeting were very dated, and yet in line with the age and design of the rest of the building; it was observed that if the dated elements of the teen space were continuous throughout the library, they didn't detrimentally affect the feeling of the space itself or act as a sign of teen devaluation. In the case of Library D, the teen space was filled with inexpensive furniture or furniture that appeared to potentially be donated or purchased used. Rather than giving the room a shabby, overlooked appearance, the teen space had the feeling of a comfortable rec room where teens could feel comfortable putting their feet up. In contrast, Library E benefited from a new building and current, modern designs. The teen space, however, still suffered from a general feeling of abandonment due to a lack of staff attention and under-utilized displays. Though there were quality fixtures, the active intent behind the space's creation wasn't clear.

Admittedly, some of the recommended indicators for quality teen spaces are not without cost, and not easily duplicated by libraries with limited funding. Examples discussed in the literature are by their very nature standouts, representative of the ideal rather than the norm. Research for this paper was conducted with these limitations in mind, however, and all libraries were not expected to include all indicators to the same ability. Layout/Location and Furniture are two categories particularly difficult for libraries with limited resources to address. All of the libraries, regardless of potential limitations, managed to create dedicated teen spaces, however. While two of the spaces were fortunate enough to have a separate room or floor to devote to teens, others had to be more creative in creating such a space. Each of the remaining libraries used shelving

units to create walls where there were none, defining and enclosing the space in such a way to make the feeling of a room. This could have perhaps been taken farther by libraries A, B, and E, however, whose teen spaces remained too open to the activity nearby, potentially disrupting or deterring both teen and adult or children patrons. Library D's use of used furniture, discussed above, serves as a good illustration of the significant impact creative, inexpensive design elements can have on teen space design.

Indeed, among the more powerful design statements in all of the sample set were the two simple signs posted in libraries D and F that defined and limited the space to teen use. These two signs appeared inexpensive, and could easily be recreated without any expense. Their success lied in the simple yet forceful way the intent of the space was advertised. Teens were given power in being assigned their own space, and added to this was the fact that the value the libraries placed on them was displayed for other library patrons to see as well. While these two libraries each had the benefit of a separate room for their teen space, this is an idea that could be extended to libraries with open teen spaces by reserving furniture or study tables in the area for teen use.

Intent can also be expressed more subtly through other identifying elements. Each of the indicators discussed played a major role in one of the primary reasons teen space design is important: spaces must be obviously identifiable as teen spaces. It was determined through the course of the observations that this identification can be achieved through a variety of means. While directional signage guiding to the teen space was imperative, signage was not always of primary importance in identifying a teen space. It is a common thought in public service that people don't read signs. The more successful teen spaces featured a design that clearly labeled them as such whether or not an obvious

sign was present. Library A's space was clearly distinguished by unique shelving and posters and Library C by its gaming chairs and bright flyers. And, when lack of signage left me stumped, it was the bright colors of the octagonal pole that served as the centerpiece of Library E's teen space that guided me straight to it.

In some spaces, unclear signage was more of a detriment than a benefit. Libraries D and F featured unique, branded names to refer to their teen spaces, and it was these names that were used on signage. Neither name made reference to teens or any other related term, nor clearly indicated the purpose of the space. While branding is a potentially important way to distinguish a teen space from other library areas and identify its mission, clarity must be a significant factor.

Perhaps the weakest indicator of teen space design for all libraries was music, which the literature suggested should be made available in teen spaces either through a sound system or through personal listening stations. None of the libraries featured music in the way recommended. This absence is possibly attributable to the quiet, hushed atmospheres still standard in libraries. It is easier for teen design elements such as furniture or accessories to be included than for something as potentially disruptive to other patrons as music. With this in mind, teen spaces should consider incorporating music in more creative ways, such as through poster choice or by developing a music collection for circulation.

While music itself is of great interest to teens, this category should perhaps be extended to include noise itself. Teens have a great need for socialization, and with that often comes noise. In addition, teens are multi-taskers who are more comfortable in a busy, active environment. In this study, the libraries that appeared to welcome noise and

activity in the teen spaces generally appeared more appealing and successful. While teen spaces are becoming more and more common, teens' need for noise remains one of the largest areas of teen space design that needs work. As library atmospheres in general begin to be updated and move away from the quiet, cold stereotype, however, hopefully this element too will begin to be addressed with more frequency.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

Limitations in time and funding restricted the sample to a small set of libraries. A larger sample size with a wider geographical spread would improve generalizability. Further, the examination of smaller libraries and libraries supported by more varied budgets would provide a more complete picture of the current state of public library teen spaces. The larger, central libraries such as examined in this paper are more likely to have the funding to create dedicated teen spaces as recommended by the literature than smaller libraries. While this paper found the sample set to be moderately successful in providing such spaces, a more diverse sample set might have achieved different results.

It is also important to emphasize that all observation took place over a limited period of time, and without consultation with local librarians or staff members. Therefore, it is possible that certain elements of the teen space design were not visible during the visit or were simply missed during the period of observation. This method of observation was chosen, however, based on the thought that teen patrons are unlikely to ask for assistance and would spend a limited amount of time in the space. Any elements not readily apparent to me during the observation would likely not be apparent to teen patrons either.

While this research focused purely on field observation for data collection, the addition of circulation and use statistics for studied teen spaces would be beneficial to a paper with a broader scope. This qualitative data would aid in concluding whether the spaces were adequate in aspects aside from aesthetic appeal. Analysis of the

appropriateness of the size of the space and amount of available seating are two particular elements that would benefit from this data. While one study table and one comfortable chair might be appropriate for one teen space, another might require numerous seating options to meet teen needs during peak times. An extended case study evaluating actual teen use of the space would also be valuable in determining design success.

Conclusion

While the literature indicates that the library profession has an understanding of both the importance of well-designed teen spaces and the elements that such a teen space should include, this paper predicted that this understanding is not reflected in current libraries. Teens are classically an under-served and disenfranchised group that are nevertheless significant library users. Public libraries are undergoing a renaissance of sorts, with their role in the community and the community's perception of the library as a space expanding. This expanded role sees libraries responding directly to the needs and wants of its users and finding success because of this collaboration. However, this paper predicted that libraries are still not fully addressing the needs of teens despite the potential for mutual benefit.

Using a case study method, a small purposive sample of North Carolina library teen spaces was observed to evaluate teen library spaces in current practice. This study built on existing research and knowledge by examining the extent to which its influence can be observed in library teen spaces today. While there has been much discussion in library literature about best practices and model designs, there is little quantitative or analytical research to examine the adoption of these models. This paper aimed to identify and publicize the gap between theory and practice and, by doing so, to improve library service to teens.

Observation of the sample set showed that, while there is a gap between theory and practice, libraries are in fact making strides in providing dedicated, welcoming

spaces for teen patrons. Attempts are being made to include specific decorative and functional elements with proven teen appeal, but these more progressive attempts remain burdened by their incorporation into limiting library infrastructures such as building design and policy. Existing buildings need to be reevaluated, and new buildings designed with teen needs in mind. The most carefully designed teen space forced by building design to be located adjacent to the children's section will be forever limited. Public libraries must continue to recognize the specific needs of teens and make changes in library service to better meet them. Teen space design is but one, albeit symbolically important, aspect to library service that must continue to be improved.

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