

***Start-to-Finish YA
Programs:
Hip-Hop Symposiums,
Summer Reading Programs,
Virtual Tours, Poetry Slams, Teen
Advisory Boards, Term Paper
Clinics, and More!***

Ella W. Jones

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FOREWORD

One of the best parts of providing training for library staff members on services to teens is how much I learn. For example, the third edition of *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries* (Neal-Schuman, 2004) is loaded with best practices I've picked up presenting workshops across the United States and Canada. It is amazing the great work happening with teens in school and public libraries and how eager people are to share that information with their colleagues during workshops. The hardest part of these workshops is ending the "best practices" sharing segment because often people have so much to share. I often suggest people consider writing articles for the professional literature when I hear about a particularly strong or unique program.

When I presented a workshop in Arlington, Texas, in April 2005, I realized that one person in the audience had enough materials for a book, not just an article. Ella totally blew away all of us at that workshop with her ideas, her experiences, and her enthusiasm for teen programming. I suggested she consider a book for Neal-Schuman on the topic of teen programming, with a focus on urban libraries. Within a few weeks, she had an outline ready and a good part of the book pulled together from her work at the Fort Worth Public Library.

What Ella brings to the table isn't just her experience as a librarian, but years of work with teens as a teacher—an award-winning teacher. But more than that, Ella brings an urban experience into this field of young adult programming. Ella's background brings to the forefront the important role that librarians can play in the lives of inner-city teens.

That is, you do the right program for the right audience at the right time. Ella's not just looking at planning and promoting programs, but rather at the bigger picture of marketing. That formula of the six Ps (plus one!) grounds librarians in perhaps the hardest, yet most essential element of presenting successful teen programs. It's not about flyers or posters, but figuring out what you are selling, to whom you are selling it, and how you plan to get teens to "buy" your program. So, in addition to marketing, Ella gives us reminders (or new info for many) on how to sell.

Yet, this book isn't just about the sizzle; it's about the steak—steak that she's cooked and served for you in 25 program packets. What I've tried to do in all three editions of *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries* is make the information contained therein practical, but Ella's gone a step better. The information is not only practical; it's ready to use. Given busy schedules, less people to do this work, and more demands on our time, Ella provides all of us with 25 turnkey teen programs. This is how-to-do-it taken to a whole new level of detail, perfect for beginners but still useful for the seasoned programming professional.

Both beginners and experienced librarians, however, know that, above all else, the most important element to consider in planning any service, any program, any collection, or any new initiative is to know the audience you want to reach. Ella's background in urban libraries provides a foundation for the work here to reach that audience, but the ideas and energy can work wherever staff seek to connect young adults and libraries.

Patrick Jones
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and Award-winning Author
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PREFACE

The episode of the *Oprah Winfrey Show* that aired on October 26, 2005, concerned addictions. At the end of the program, Oprah announced that, because she was so impressed with the author of the book she had featured on her program that day, she was going to make a donation to the ALA (American Library Association) to help fund teen programs. She explained that having more programs available for teens would help prevent many of them from taking the path her guest author had chosen as a teen.

Oprah’s statement—that library programs for teens can prevent problems—reinforces what young adult (YA) librarians already know and what the Search Institute®’s 40 Developmental Assets® assert: Programs designed to serve teens will help them grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible adults. This belief is also behind my personal motto: *If we can reach one, we can teach one*. YA programs do just that.

My daughter saw Oprah’s show that day. Afterward, she called me. She was very excited and said, “Mom, society needs your book!” I had already started writing my book, but this re-inspired me. It gave me the validation that I needed to share these valuable resources.

To assess what to convey in a book on YA programming, I conducted telephone interviews with teen librarians and library assistants, whom I selected from the Fort Worth Public Library System and surrounding cities to ensure inclusion of users of all types of libraries. Ninety-five percent of those polled felt a need for a workbook on teen programming. Creative ideas and how to plan the event were the participants’ greatest concerns.

CONTENT

Start-to-Finish YA Programs both showcases and is a planning tool for creative and innovative methods of developing programs for teenagers. Part I, “Let’s Get Started!,” discusses why we should provide programs for teens and describes how to plan, market, and evaluate the programs. To help librarians apply for grants, the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets are included along with a companion list of programs supporting each group of assets. Part II, “Twenty-Five Creative and Innovative Teen Programs,” showcases 25 teen-tested programs, with customizable flyers, rave cards, registration forms, sign-up sheets, and more, as well as a few PowerPoint presentations, all of which are included on the accompanying CD-ROM. Program packets also include step-by-step instructions on how to produce the programs start to finish: from initial planning to publicity, to conducting and evaluating the program. Explaining the goals of the programs, including the Developmental Assets the programs address, is invaluable when presenting a program idea to library administrators. The programs cover a variety of interests: music, fashion, dance, business,

competition, and literature. Part III, “The Finish Line,” discusses the outcome of programming for teens, includes a grant-writing resource list, and provides additional resources and references.

THE NEED FOR PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

I spent over 25 years in the field of education (15 years as a high school teacher, 5 years as a counselor/acting assistant principal of an alternative high school, and 7 years as the director of a private elementary school) before switching to librarianship. I first got the idea to write a book to provide guidelines on planning and implementing library programs for teenagers when I was working on the thesis for my master’s degree in library and information science at the University of North Texas (UNT), called the Capstone Experience. I had many discussions about teen programming with practicing young adult librarians and members of the Texas Library Association (TLA). I have also conducted discussion workshops for North Texas Regional Library Systems (NTRLS) titled “Can We Talk . . . About Teen Programming” and “Can We Talk a Little Close . . . Teen Programming for Small/Rural Libraries.”

The discussions about teen programming always included comments like “the need for useful tools and sources,” as well as “meeting teens’ developmental needs.” Teen librarians frequently mentioned that separating young adult library users from adult or children users is a relatively recent development in libraries. Therefore, many library schools do not instruct librarians on the information they need to develop teen programs by giving them practical how-to instructions, strategies, and tools.

There are similarities between education and librarianship: providing information, guidance, and instruction to students and other library users such as parents, teachers, and school administrators. Librarians who learn how to do effective teen programming will increase library usage as well as meet teens’ developmental needs. By sponsoring programs for young adults, the library community is more likely to retain teenagers as library users who will become library supporters as adults. Libraries do not, should not, and cannot develop services and programs for young adults because it is good *only* for the library, but rather because these services and programs will make an affirmative impact leading to positive outcomes for teens. “Healthy youth create healthy communities in which libraries can thrive” (Jones, 2002: 16).

This resource book with accompanying CD-ROM was designed for libraries, schools, youth groups—anyone who works with teens. According to Department of Education statistics, public high school enrollment is expected to continue to increase, which will have a great impact on all types of organizations that serve young adults, ages 13 through 19. The need for more trained caregivers is obvious. It makes no difference if the organization is a library, a school, a church, or a youth club—all will feel the impact of the greater numbers in this client group now and in the years to come. Be prepared with Start-to-Finish YA Programs.

REFERENCE

Jones, Patrick. 2002. *New Directions for Library Service to Young Adults*. Chicago: American Library Association.