

**create, relate, & pop
@ the library:
services & programs
for teens & tweens**

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and
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Preface

Inspirational? Excitable? Adaptable? Informational? Yes! Traditional? No. As two librarians who bonded as coworkers over a shared obsession with pop culture, the authors are well aware that not all young adult librarians share their over-the-top interest in this arena.

Thus, *Create, Relate, & Pop @ the Library: Services & Programs for Teens & Tweens* is intended to make it easier for the youth specialist and generalist to keep up with the fast-paced world of tween and teen pop culture. This book presents a framework of philosophy for providing creative, relatable, and pop culture–relevant services and programs with practical tips and ideas for keeping up with the world of tweens and teens. Awesomely, there are also 47 detailed program descriptions divided into 13 different topic-based chapters!

Create, Relate, & Pop @ the Library explores how infusing pop culture into teen services with a focus on programming and events can engage the teens in your community in new and exciting ways. Learn how to become a facilitator and innovator of programming on topics you may have little to no interest in or no knowledge of. Turn your own particular obsessions, interests, and talents into potential service or programming opportunities. Find practical and detailed examples, instructions, and resources for providing tween and teen programming that uses pop culture as a jumping-off point. This approach will excite interest from reluctant library users and potentially engage devoted users in new ways. Learn how many of your younger teens may be better served by programs for tweens, as well as how to engage the older and edgier teens in your community.

The title *Create, Relate, & Pop @ the Library* came from trying to find a fun and catchy way to encapsulate the authors' philosophy of service to tweens and teens. Create, Relate, & Pop is a framework with which to plan, conduct, and evaluate library services and collections.

- **Create:** Library collections and services, like free access to information and services, create opportunities for young people to explore and try new things. Li-

brarians live to provide opportunities to create: art, movies, jewelry, rockets, science experiments, food, music, clothes, gifts, etc. The *Create* part of the equation is where libraries and librarians are already doing a top-notch job. Libraries are more often filling the recreational, explorational, and inspirational roles that schools used to provide with after-school clubs and more extensive elective class selections.

- **Relate:** In order to grab the interest of teens and hold it, you need to be relevant to their lives. This of course happens using pop culture and being in tune with their lives and what's important and current, but it also has to do with creating opportunities for teens and tweens to become healthy, caring, responsible, and well-rounded people. Staying relevant is often the hardest part because the job never ends—as tween and teen interests and obsessions change and flow, so must librarians keep up with this change and flow.
- **Pop:** The *Pop* is the easy part. *Pop* is fun; *pop* is current; *pop* is what they want. *Pop* is also flexible. *Pop* does not just mean what's popular with the majority. Thanks to the Internet and its ability to digitally unite people from across the globe or across the street, there are many niche and cultlike communities based on interests about which the average American has never heard. In a country with more than 300 million people, an interest that attracts 500,000 or even 2 million is tiny enough to be obscure, but large enough that it shouldn't be ignored.

Using *Create, Relate, & Pop*

This book can be easily consumed by the on-demand reader who skips to the chapter describing a program that is needed next week as well as by the reader who prefers a cover-to-cover approach. The initial six chapters describe the why and how teens became so powerful and an entity unto themselves between the world of child and adulthood; next, dive into philosophies and how best to Create, Relate, & Pop in your library; and finish with 13 chapters packed with programming ideas, instructions, and resources, plus a final concluding chapter.

Chapter 1, “From ‘Dyn-o-Mite’ to ‘How *You* Doin’?': History of Teen/Tween Pop Culture,” outlines a brief timeline of teen and tween pop culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Take a trip down memory lane using pop culture touchstones or use it as a reference for infusing retro popular culture experiences into programs for today's teens.

The philosophy at the heart of *Create, Relate, & Pop* is explored and defined in Chapter 2, “‘Here It Is, Your Moment of Zen’: Defining Create, Relate, & Pop.” Moving away from the traditional library model of serving teens and tweens can breathe life into programming. Learn to capitalize on the latest consumer trends by programming around them.

Determining different interest groups in a teen population is discussed in Chapter 3, “OMG!/: Targeting Populations, Advertising, and Promotion.” Knowing your audience is very helpful when defining services at your library or school. Survey your teens/tweens and find out who is living in your community. This chapter will help you match programs to your kids, whether they are socs, greasers, outsiders, goths, hippies, burn-outs, freaks, geeks, mean girls, emos, indies, or whatever the particular teen tribes are in your community. Once you have identified your audience and their interests, we will teach you how to market your program to them.

Programming using popular celebrities and trendy hobbies must be supported by the library collection. Chapter 4, “Make It Work: Collections,” gives tips on how to keep the collection current, healthy, and, most important, relevant to the teen and tween interests of the moment.

Chapter 5, “Keep ’Em Coming: Spaces,” gives ideas on how to make a teen or tween area in the library pop culture friendly. The chapter describes easy and creative ways to keep current with the latest trends using input from the young adults being served, producing a space defined by the popular interests of the moment.

More than anything else, this book is about programming. Programs are the best way to engage your users, get them into the library, and keep them coming back. Chapter 6, “I Want My MTV!/: Programming,” explains the foundations for a successful teen/tween library program.

The heart of *Create, Relate, & Pop @ the Library* is the 13 programming chapters, which include detailed information featuring 47 different program ideas. Chapters 7 through 19 are divided by topic: art, celebrities and reality television, contests, cooking and food, do-it-yourself crafts, gaming, Japanese popular culture, beauty and body modification, magic and mystical worlds, music, physical activities, summer reading programs, and technology. Each program description includes the following:

- General description
- *Pop*—how and in what specific way it relates to pop culture
- *Relate*—what opportunities for learning and experience this provides for the young person and the assets it may potentially provide
- Instructors/talent
- Audience—who is the best or potential audience
- Planning and supplies
- *Create*—detailed instructions on how to run the program
- Food, technology, and other mandatory extras
- Analysis—thoughts on the success of the program and other ideas for similar programs or things to try when you do it again

- Marketing tips
- Resources

Learn how to freshen up tried-and-true craft programs or how to use reality television, fandom, movies, and teen obsessions with food to offer dynamic and fun programs. Programs described include Comic Book Academy, Pinhole Photography, *Top Chef* Winner Appearance, Graffiti Contests, Sushi Making, Shrinky-Dink Crafts, Pokémon Tournaments, Amigurumi Crochet, Nail Art, Psychic Fair, Parkour and Freerunning, Filmmaking 101, and more.

It's a New World! Let's Jump In!

One of the greatest opportunities that libraries and librarians have is to expose young people to the world around them—from meeting neighbors and community members to the world at large and everything in between. From culture and the arts to hands-on opportunities to learn skills, sciences, crafts, trades, and arts from people working in those fields, libraries offer young people opportunities that often cannot be found elsewhere—and certainly not for the library's "free of charge" level. It's a post-"give them what they want" world. There is no longer time to debate whether what's popular is "okay" and whether catering to their interests is "dumbing down" what librarians do. As institutions of the people, librarians must be relevant to the lives of our taxpayers. Embrace the change! From introducing the power of well-honed information-seeking skills in the real world to providing opportunities to create their own information and express themselves with art or culture, librarians are in a unique position to empower young people with their neutral and open position in the world. *Create, Relate, & Pop @ the Library* will do just that, demonstrating how you can relate to your tweens and teens in new ways and harness the enthusiasm they have for their obsessions in constructive and fun ways to create engaging programs. This new participatory, user-created world is a perfect fit for creating programs that teens and tweens want.