

Young Adult Services for the Year 2000

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In 1985, Barbara Will Razzano brought to the nation's attention the importance of library service to youth. One of her major findings was that the "overwhelming majority of all current adult library users began that use while under the age of eighteen," and she concluded that "service to children and young adults should be a major component of all public library service programs."¹

In contrast, the results of the recent National Center for Educational Statistics survey report of the status of young adult services and resources in public libraries² showed that YAs may not be receiving adequate support from public library administration,³ making them one of public libraries' most at-risk user groups.

Although 25 percent of all library users nationwide are young adults,⁴ only 15 percent of the total library budget is devoted to YA collections⁵ and only 11 percent of all public libraries employ young adult services coordinators.⁶ In North Carolina, these last figures are more disproportionate, with only three full-time young adult librarians in the state⁷ and a 9.35 percent average budget for young adult collections.⁸ Clearly a gap exists between the importance of young adults as a user group and the provision of services to them.

The purpose of this study is to investigate what public library directors see as the future of young adult services in North Carolina. The results indicate areas of agreement and disagreement among directors and can serve to assist library professionals in setting priorities and possibilities for growth in the next ten years ... and ultimately, improving the prospects for bridging the gap.

Thomas Downen's⁹ survey of public library directors completed in 1978 included directors from across the nation whose

library systems served at least 100,000 people. The purpose of his study was "to ascertain informed and intuitive judgments about the future of young adult services from persons in leadership..." Using the Delphi technique, respondents completed three rounds. In the final

round they ranked each statement about the future of public library young adult services as to its desirability and probability by the year 1993. The final rankings for many statements showed wide differences between what directors saw as desirable and

what they perceived as probable. For example, 81 percent of the library directors felt that "continuation and expansion of personalized, direct service to this group was desirable," but "only 41 percent felt it was probable."¹⁰

More recently Mary E. Cooper¹¹ completed a similar Delphi study. Her respondents also indicated wide gaps between what was desirable and probable. On one item, 84 percent felt a YA coordinator's position in every public library system was very desirable, but only five percent believed it probable.

Library directors were chosen as the population for this survey because of the pivotal role they play in the decision making process, and thus the complexion of library services in the state. On the local level, they control staff and budget allocations and set priorities and objectives for public library services in their respective communities. As state leaders, they may possess the most authoritative view of the future of all library services, and have the potential for the greatest influence on the direction of young adult services in the next ten years.

A total of 203 library directors were identified based on the data available from the *Statistics and Directory of North Carolina Public Libraries, July 1, 1988 - June 30, 1989*.¹² All public library directors in North Carolina were surveyed including: main libraries (inclusive of independent municipal libraries), main libraries with branches, regional libraries, and regional library branches. Both those libraries receiving and those libraries not receiving state aid were included. Branches of main libraries were not surveyed.

This questionnaire was designed using items selected from the Downen survey and the Cooper survey. Because of the wide discrepancies in the results of both of these surveys between what respondents found *desirable* and what respondents found *probable*, the survey was redesigned to be a questionnaire which asked predictions of what *will* occur in young adult services rather than what directors felt *should* occur. The questionnaire was arranged into four main sections: Facilities and Environment, Services and Programming, Collections, and Organization and Staffing. Each of the fifty items was scored by the respondent on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Respondents were also asked at the conclusion to state their title or position and were encouraged to make comments. The survey was pretested with several individuals knowledgeable of public library services and was refined according to their input.

Surveys were mailed the second week in November 1990 to all 203 library directors. Ninety-five responses were received from this initial mailing. A subsequent mailing was sent the first week of January, and an additional forty-one responses were received for a total of 136. Each mailing consisted of a two-page

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questionnaire, one-page cover letter, and a return self-addressed stamped envelope.

As questionnaires were received, responses were coded by position/title (director/nondirector) and type of library reporting (main, main with branches, regional, or regional branch). Divisions for this latter category were determined in accordance with the NCES survey.¹³ Independent municipal libraries were coded as either main or main with branches. In addition, for those libraries which reported data in the *North Carolina Statistics and Directory of Public Libraries*, per capita receipts, professional FTE, and door count per week were also used. All data were coded for computer analysis using SPSSx. Frequencies and percentages of responses to categories on the five point scale were tabulated with tables that were designed based on the results of statistical analysis.

The overall response rate for the survey was 63 percent (Table 1). Only 50 percent of the regional branches responded to the survey, while almost 90 percent of the main libraries with branches responded.

TABLE 1: RESPONSE RATE

Library Type:	Not Returned:	Not Usable:	Usable:	Percent Usable:
Main	13	1	31	69%
Main with Branch(es)	5	0	39	89%
Regional	3	1	11	73%
Regional Branch	46	5	48	50%
TOTAL	67	7	129	63%

Of those who responded, sixty individuals or 64 percent indicated they were in the Director category (Table 2). Others gave a variety of titles such Branch Librarian, Children's Librarian, or support personnel. A few of the respondents from the Regional Branch category indicated they were "Directors." It was decided not to include them in the Director respondent group since main library branch personnel had not been included.

Data from the *North Carolina Directory* provided some descriptive characteristics of the Director respondent group libraries (Table 2). Fifty-seven percent of their libraries had from one to four professionals on staff. Sixty-two percent had per capita receipts of from \$4.00 to \$9.99. Using annual door count data where available, 60 percent of the libraries averaged more than one thousand individuals per week.

Directors' responses to each of the fifty items are recorded in Table 3 (pages 60 and 61). Since item nonresponse rate was less than two percent for all items, responses are reported in percentage of the total number of all respondents (n=129) or directors (n=60) who strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or were neutral.

Facilities and Environment

Directors tended to agree or strongly agree with browsing areas for young adults (item 6, 90%), and largely favored increased access to technology for them (item 10, 83%). Additionally, directors be-

lieved libraries will provide attractive/comfortable furnishings for young adults (item 5, 78%) and microcomputer and software access (item 9, 63%). Directors were less positive or negative toward four items in this first section. Approximately one-third of the respondents were neutral on issues of special areas for YAs (item 4, 35%), public libraries as teen centers for political/social awareness (item 8, 34%), flexible public library hours to accommodate school schedules (item 7, 33%), and separate areas or rooms for YAs (item 1, 27%).

Two items in this section were in direct opposition. These dealt with the location of young adult services (items 2 and 3). Directors did not agree with the prediction that YA services will be located with children's services, with 78 percent indicating disagree/strongly disagree. Instead, they see locating YA services with adult services, with 63 percent indicating agree/strongly agree. However, in comparing the responses of the directors to the responses of the whole of respondents on these same two items, a difference emerges. The group of all respondents also did not foresee locating YA services with children's services (78 percent), but they were less sure than the directors that YA services would be located with adult services (52 percent neutral/disagree/strongly disagree).

Services and Programs

Directors generally supported the public library's involvement in YA programming and services. Ninety-two percent believed the public library will increase emphasis on reading for pleasure (item 18), and 90 percent foresee the public

TABLE 2: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Position/Title:	ALL RESPONDENTS		LIBRARY DIRECTORS	
	Number:	Percent:	Number:	Percent
Director	82	64%	60	100%
Other	47	36%		
Type of Library:				
Main Library	31	24%	17	28%
Main with Branch(es)	39	30%	35	59%
Regional	11	9%	8	13%
Regional Branch	48	37%	0	0
Per Capita Receipts:				
0 — \$3.99	2	2%	0	0
\$4.00 — \$6.99	15	12%	13	22%
\$7.00 — \$9.99	30	23%	24	40%
\$10.00 — \$12.99	13	10%	11	18%
\$13.00 — \$15.99	7	5%	4	7%
\$16.00 +	9	7%	7	11%
Unknown	53	41%	1	2%
Professional Staff/FTE:				
None	12	9%	3	5%
1-2 professionals	27	21%	22	37%
3-4 professionals	14	11%	12	20%
5-8 professionals	10	8%	8	13%
9-12 professionals	8	6%	8	13%
13 + professionals	6	5%	6	10%
Unknown	52	40%	1	2%
Door Count Per Week:				
Less than 200	5	4%	0	0
200-999	19	15%	13	22%
1000-1999	17	13%	16	27%
2000 +	25	19%	20	33%
Unknown	63	49%	11	18%

TABLE 3: RESPONDENT AND DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS

Item	All Respondents n = 129					Library Directors n = 60				
	*SA	*A	*N	*D	*SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
Facilities and Environment:										
1. Public libraries will have separate YA areas or rooms.	25	41	18	14	2	22	27	27	20	4
2. Young adult services will be located with children's services.	2	7	13	41	37	2	10	10	45	33
3. Young adult services will be located with adult services.	2	46	24	23	5	2	61	19	15	3
4. Public libraries will have special areas where YAs can get together.	13	44	26	15	2	8	40	35	15	2
5. YA areas in public libraries will have furnishings that are attractive and appropriate.	24	58	16	2	0	16	62	19	3	0
6. Browsing areas will feature YA fiction and topical nonfiction.	28	61	10	1	0	29	61	10	0	0
7. Public libraries will have flexible hours to accommodate school calendars, special events, and other functions.	12	43	29	15	1	10	42	33	15	0
8. Public libraries will become alternative teen centers helping to develop political and social awareness.	8	13	32	29	18	5	9	34	32	20
9. Public libraries will provide YAs with microcomputer and software access for school and personal work.	12	52	20	14	2	11	52	17	20	0
10. Public libraries will provide teens with access to technology such as CD-ROM systems/online searching.	17	55	22	5	1	22	61	14	3	0
Services and Programs:										
11. Public libraries will see an increase in innovative and creative services for YAs.	17	57	18	7	1	7	61	20	12	0
12. Public libraries will increase marketing to publicize library events for teens.	15	67	12	5	1	10	70	15	5	0
13. Public libraries will give more tours and school presentations to familiarize YAs with their services.	22	63	13	2	0	15	66	17	2	0
14. Public libraries will offer walk-in tutorial services for YAs.	9	29	37	22	3	5	22	40	30	3
15. Public libraries will offer programs for latchkey kids.	12	34	29	21	4	12	41	30	15	2
16. Public libraries will develop more information and retrieval services for YAs.	10	67	17	6	0	8	63	22	7	0
17. Public libraries will be viewed as reputable, honest, and factual sources for drug and health information.	33	58	6	3	0	20	70	8	2	0
18. Public libraries will place a greater emphasis on encouraging YAs to read for enjoyment.	39	55	4	1	1	31	61	6	2	0
19. Public libraries will develop more services to YAs outside the building.	3	18	43	29	7	2	15	41	35	7
20. Public libraries will increase emphasis on reaching noncollege bound youth.	10	57	26	7	0	8	55	27	10	0
21. Public librarians will become more involved in organizations and agencies supporting YAs.	4	48	39	6	3	3	47	39	7	4
22. Public libraries will join with community agencies for public service programs (e.g., teens and senior citizens).	5	60	27	6	2	8	53	29	7	3
23. Public libraries will see more involvement of YAs in public libraries as volunteers.	8	58	25	7	2	3	53	30	12	2
24. School and public libraries will experience greater cooperation.	36	50	9	3	2	25	53	15	4	3

*SA = Strongly agree; *A = Agree; *N = Neutral; *D = Disagree; *SD= Strongly Disagree

TABLE 3: RESPONDENT AND DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS (cont.)

Item	All Respondents n=129					Library Directors n=60				
	SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
Collections:										
25. YA collections will be more diverse and based on demand, including materials not likely to be found elsewhere.	20	60	16	4	0	20	55	18	7	0
26. Public libraries will develop special interest collections to attract least served YAs.	14	58	20	8	0	13	46	29	12	0
27. YA collections will emphasize career information and materials for teens.	20	69	9	2	0	10	75	12	3	0
28. YA collections will emphasize hobby and special interest materials.	12	70	16	2	0	7	68	22	3	0
29. Public libraries will provide YA paperback collections in nonlibrary settings.	7	27	41	23	2	2	20	43	35	0
30. YA collections will include greater numbers of HI-LO reading materials.	13	57	24	6	0	10	57	28	5	0
31. YA collections will include magazines with wider appeal and scope.	9	71	16	4	0	8	70	17	5	0
32. YA collections will include books and magazines on parenting.	12	59	26	3	0	12	57	28	3	0
33. Public libraries' collections will integrate all formats in the YA area.	8	41	37	14	0	5	32	41	22	0
34. YA collections will include videos for instructional purposes, e.g. how to get a summer job.	12	55	24	8	1	14	52	24	10	0
35. YA print collections will be mainly paperback books.	7	33	38	18	4	10	32	37	18	3
36. The YA collection will be integrated into the adult collection.	5	17	29	38	11	7	23	29	33	8
37. The YA collection will be a nonpermanent rotating collection.	3	15	32	44	6	2	20	27	46	5
Organization and Staffing:										
38. Public libraries will experience a renewed interest in YA services and resources among library professionals.	13	52	25	8	2	8	43	32	15	2
39. Public libraries will experience a renewed interest in YA services and resources among library administrators.	13	45	27	13	2	8	43	27	22	0
40. Every public library will have a YA coordinator position.	7	20	28	34	11	3	17	25	40	15
41. YA coordinators will be associated with the children's services department.	4	25	29	34	8	3	23	25	39	10
42. YA coordinators will be associated with the adult services department.	5	38	37	16	4	8	47	27	13	5
43. Staffing and funding for YA services will increase locally.	10	30	35	20	5	5	18	43	27	7
44. Staffing and funding for YA services will increase in North Carolina.	10	38	26	20	6	5	24	36	28	7
45. The library budget will support YA needs on an equal basis with other groups.	13	36	25	22	4	7	34	29	27	3
46. Members of the public library staff will be more aware of YAs as people, not just nuisances.	20	62	11	6	1	15	59	15	9	2
47. Competencies for YA services will be included as a part of North Carolina public library certification.	13	34	35	16	2	8	25	42	20	5
48. Additional continuing education opportunities will be available in YA services.	16	61	18	5	0	10	65	18	7	0
49. There will be increased efforts to develop additional measures for determining YA use of materials and services.	13	66	17	4	0	12	68	13	7	0
50. The profession will work toward a consensus on the definition of "young adult" and on the functions of YA departments and coordinators.	16	61	19	4	0	15	58	19	8	0

All totals are reported as percentages.

library as a health and drug information center for YAs (item 17). Directors agreed or strongly agreed that public libraries will increase the marketing of library events for teens (item 12, 80%), and that public libraries will conduct more tours and school outreach efforts (item 13, 81%). Similarly, directors predicted an increase in school and public library cooperative efforts (item 24, 78%), a greater involvement with community service programs which involve YAs (item 22, 61%), and greater emphasis on the non-college bound youth (item 20, 63%). Directors believed public libraries will increase information and retrieval services to this group (item 16, 71%) and increase innovative services to YAs (item 11, 68%).

For the future of the five remaining items in this section, directors remained predominately undecided or neutral: services to YAs outside the building (item 19, 41%), provision of walk-in tutorials (item 14, 40%), involvement with organizations and agencies supporting YAs (item 21, 39%), programs for latchkey kids (item 15, 30%). It is interesting to note that although the responses of the group of total respondents were also mainly neutral or undecided on these items, they were generally more positive than the directors.

Collections

A convincing percentage of directors agreed or strongly agreed to seven of the thirteen items in this section. Public library directors anticipated collections: emphasizing career materials (item 27,

85%); including magazines with wider appeal (item 31, 78%); increasing their diversity (item 25, 75%); including more hobby or special interest materials (item 28, 75%); including materials on parenting (item 32, 69%); increasing the availability of HI-LO materials (item 30, 67%); and including in-

structional videos for teens (item 34, 66%). Slightly less convincing was the 59 percent who felt public libraries will develop special interest collections for the least served YAs (item 26).

Responses to three of the items revealed directors to be less in agreement or disagreement and more neutral. Directors were unsure about providing print collections in mainly paperback format (item 35, 37% neutral), and more unsure about the provision of YA paperback collections in nonlibrary settings (item 29, 43%). Directors were also neutral toward the integration of all formats in the YA area (item 33, 41%).

Items 36 and 37 dealt with the structure and location of YA collections. Directors were neutral or did not agree that YA collections will be integrated in the adult collection (item 37, 78%). Here, it is interesting to note that the total respondent group revealed somewhat higher neutral and negative responses than the directors to both items.

Organization and Staffing

Perhaps not unexpectedly, items in this section received the greatest variations in responses. Directors did not agree that every public library will have a YA coordinator position, with 55 percent disagree/strongly disagree and the total going up to 80 percent with the neutral responses included (item 40). They displayed uncertainty as to whether the library budget will

support YA services and needs on an equal basis (item 45, 29% neutral). However, they were more positive about seeing a renewed interest in YA services among library professionals (item 38) and library administrators (item 39), with 51 percent agree/strongly agree to each item.

Directors did agree/strongly agree that there will be increased efforts to develop measures for determining YA use of materials and services (item 49, 80%). They also foresee an increase in continuing education opportunities in the area of YA services (item 48, 75%). Perhaps based on the above two, directors did see the profession working toward a consensus definition of "young adult" and on the future of YA departments and coordinators (item 50, 73%).

Library directors were not sure or were negative about the possibility of increased staffing and funding for YA services locally, with 43 percent neutral and 34 percent disagree or strongly disagree (item 44). If comparing the directors' responses to the total respondent group on these two predictions, the directors were much less optimistic.

Items 41 and 42 dealt with the association of YA coordinators with children's or adult services. As such, the responses can be compared to those for items 2 and 3 which addressed the location of YA services. While 78 percent of the directors did not agree that YA services will be located with children's services, 49 percent felt YA coordinators will be associated with children's services. Less dramatically, but indicating more consensus, 63 percent agreed that YA services will be located with adult services, and 55 percent predict YA coordinators will be associated with adult services.

Respondent Comments

When interpreting the data presented in this report, readers should be aware of some comments respondents made. Nine individuals specifically indicated their difficulty in separating for their answers what they wished would happen — what "should" happen in YA services — versus what they believed "would" happen. Another area on the minds of the respondents was that of funding. Eleven of the sixteen respondents who wrote lengthy responses mentioned current and anticipated budget cuts. Several respondents also mentioned the problems that small libraries had in meeting expectations of all users.

Conclusions

In general, directors predict that there will be increases in efforts to improve both young adult collections and services over the next ten years. However, they do not predict corresponding increases in staffing or funding to support additional programs and/or collection growth. Also, although they predict increased innovative and creative services to YAs, they express no group consensus as to the direction or focus of additional efforts. For example, directors agree that public libraries *will* increase services to non-college bound youth; but they also agree that they will probably *not* serve YAs outside the building, *not* provide paperback collections in non-library settings, and not develop special interest collections for the least served.

Directors do not see young adult services becoming more closely associated with children's services, although the possibility of YA coordinators associated with children's services exists. More likely, directors are predicting a closer alignment of young adult services and staff with adult services departments.

The apparent agreement of directors about a renewed interest by the profession in young adults over the next ten years is encouraging. Additional continuing education opportunities and research related to young adults are both predicted and welcome as is increased interest in school-public library cooperation. Most importantly, a priority placed by directors on the profession working toward a consensus about who young adults

are, what their needs are, and how best to meet them offers hope to all concerned in spite of the dire predictions about funding and staffing. It is essential that these initial steps be taken in order to provide young adult services in North Carolina with the necessary clarity of purpose before the greater issue of disparity between allocated resources and optimum services for young adults can be approached.

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