
Young Adult Programming

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Young adult programming in public libraries—who needs it? Both the young adults and the public libraries benefit from quality programs aimed at youth. Libraries need to hold on to their young users and keep them as patrons in their adult years. Noted YA author Richard Peck makes this point very well: "If we're to have a future generation of taxpayers and community leaders who value libraries, we'd better serve them now and make the library as important to them as it is to us."¹ The young adults need programs which offer them stimulating experiences and the information they need to function independently in the adult world.

The 1980 Census shows that there are approximately 761,000 young people between the ages of 13 and 19 in the state of North Carolina. This article will offer a sampling of the great variety of programs public libraries in the state have offered their young adult patrons in recent years. Most notable is the annual Quiz Bowl, a major programming event since 1979.

Quiz Bowl

The North Carolina State Library Quiz Bowl is a state-wide academic competition for high school students. It is organized much like the old televised College Bowl and provides an opportunity for intellectually gifted students to compete and receive recognition for excellence as do their athletically talented counterparts.

Planning for Quiz Bowl begins in early summer when the Quiz Bowl Committee meets to evaluate the previous seasons' competitions and to propose changes in rules and procedures. New committee members are recruited, and in mid-August, orientation sessions are held for libraries interested in participating. By November, librarians across the state have contacted their local schools and the names of those

schools who will sponsor teams are submitted to the Quiz Bowl Committee.

All participating libraries are requested to compose at least 100 questions for the competition using such sources as the *Encyclopedia Americana*, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *World Almanac*, *Time* and *Newsweek*. Additional questions on North Carolina history are added. In late December or January, participating libraries host local matches for the teams from the high schools in their service areas. The winners of the local competitions then proceed to one of the eight regional competitions which are usually held in March. Both the winners and runners-up of the regionals compete in the State Championship in April.

The actual matches are played between teams from different high schools. There are four students on each team with alternates. A moderator questions one team and then the other, allowing ten seconds to answer. There are three rounds in each match, the 10, 20, and 30 point rounds, with questions becoming increasingly difficult. The team amassing the greatest number of points by the end of round three wins the match. Judges are present during the competition to rule on ambiguous answers and on points of order. In most instances, the librarian acts as the coordinator.

The idea for a high school quiz bowl originated with Robert Burgin, then Director of the Wayne County Public Library, as a local library program. The idea was picked up by the Loose Region, an informal association of public libraries in southeastern North Carolina, which sponsored the first regional competition. This regional program expanded to a state-wide competition in 1980. Quiz Bowl involved 21 library systems representing 33 counties in 1980. By 1981, 23 libraries representing 39 counties had joined, and the 1982 Quiz Bowl included 28 libraries representing 50 counties, and the 1983 Quiz Bowl involved 43 libraries representing 64 counties.

Quiz bowl activities are coordinated by a committee of public librarians under the

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auspices of the North Carolina State Library. Until 1981, the cost of running the Quiz Bowl competition was the responsibility of participating libraries with additional funding for the State championship from North Carolina industries. In 1981, Assistant State Librarian Jane Williams helped secure \$2,000 of LSCA funds to promote Quiz Bowl. State support has continued at that level, with State Library consultant Nancy Wallace serving as the state-wide coordinator. There is the possibility in the future of cooperating with NCNB, HiIQ in Charlotte and High IQ in Greensboro to have one academic championship to cover as much of the state as possible. Meetings have been held, and a trial run with the Charlotte and Greensboro winners against the Quiz Bowl winner and runner-up has been played to see if this is possible. The merger would give Quiz Bowl the benefits of television coverage; electronic buzzer systems; and more money for prizes, publicity, etc. It would also leave the local competitions pretty much as they are, with libraries working directly with school systems. The influence of NCNB sponsoring the cooperative efforts of the three established quiz bowl type competitions could have a strong state-wide impact.

Organizing, coordinating, and executing a successful Quiz Bowl program demands a large commitment from those involved. The obvious benefit is the opportunity afforded the student to compete and be recognized. Less tangible, though equally valuable benefits strengthen school/library cooperation and working relationships between students and librarians. By inviting community members to participate as judges, moderators, and sponsors, Quiz Bowl enhances the image of the library as a vital organization responsive to the needs and interests of its supporters.

Other Programming

While Quiz Bowl is a major event with large audience appeal, there is a trend toward attracting young adult patrons as individuals with specialized interests to small group presentations. Kem B. Ellis developed a "Term Paper Workshop" for High Point Public Library. The purpose of the program was to help students develop library skills and identify reference tools and materials useful in term paper research. Ellis designed a workbook based on High Point's collection which participants completed and retained for future reference.

Similarly, "How to Find a Summer Job: Successful Interviewing" was the theme of a program presented by Gaston-Lincoln Regional Library's Joan Sherif. She invited representatives from the Employment Security Commission, county personnel, and local businesses to participate in a panel discussion on job-hunting tactics. The young adults then practiced interviewing with a job counselor in role playing exercises. Sherif also organized a "Drama Workshop" with individual programs on improvisation, make-up, and auditioning. Community theater members and high school drama teachers shared their expertise with the young thespians. The director of the community theater's production of "Grease" took the opportunity to scout talent.

Another academically oriented program was presented by Ernestine Blake: the "SAT Workshop" at Durham County Public Library. Two counselors, one from the Educational Opportunity Center and one from a local community education center lectured on test taking techniques, worked through sample problems, and distributed sample tests for the students to work on at home.

Robeson County Public Library's Youth Network for the Arts has held juried art competitions with great success. A steering committee of young adults took responsibility for all aspects of program planning and execution. Young people submitted entries in the following categories: fiber art, sketches and line drawings, paintings, three dimensional art, illustrated creative writing, and string art. Local artists judged the entries before the opening night reception.

Physical education and health programs were presented at two libraries. Martial arts and body image are two topics ever popular with teenagers. Laura Gorham of Durham County Public Library organized demonstrations by local professionals in both these fields. "Shape-up Exercises for the Teenager" featured a lecture/demonstration on diet, skin, and hair care followed by a thirty minute exercise program. Representatives from a local figure salon not only presented the program, but also donated a trial membership as a door prize. Karate experts from a local karate school staged a mock match with emphasis on karate as a strict mental discipline.

Also, the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Young Adult Committee joined with Planned Parenthood of Greater Charlotte to co-sponsor a series of workshops

for parents and young people on "Exploring Your Sexuality." The presenters designed different programs for different age groups:

I. "Sex Education for Parents and Children" (ages 9 - 11) Film: *Then One Year*

II. "Clarifying Sexual Values for Early Teens" (ages 12-14) Film: *Are You Ready for Sex?*

III. "Male Responsibility in Sexual Relationships" (ages 15-17) Film: *Teenage Father*

In the first program, the emphasis was on dialogue and communication between parents and children, with the speaker serving to keep discussion on track. The two programs with older participants had more direct discussion between the young adults and the speakers. In all, thirty programs were scheduled in the sixteen branch system over a four month period. Planned Parenthood educators presented the programs, while librarians provided and displayed supportive library materials.

The Public Library of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County also sponsored two YA writing programs. Sue Ellen Bridgers, YA author and Christopher award winner, spent a day with Charlotte teenagers in a program co-sponsored by Public Library of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) and the Joint Committee of Public Librarians and School Media Specialists. Bridgers visited two schools in the morning and met with students who had read her books. Later she spoke at the public library about the craft of writing novels for young people. An autograph party followed her talk. Her appearance was an exercise in school/public library cooperation as well as an effective library program.

PLCMC co-sponsored a program with the *Charlotte News* called "Summer Writers," a writing contest for teens. The *News* handled promotion which included running ads in the newspaper, holding workshops in the libraries, printing flyers, and supplying printed T-shirts for each entry. The winning entries were published in a special section of the newspaper. Additional awards to the winners included a plaque with the winning entry duplicated from the paper and a thesaurus. Some of the winners went on to become young guest editorialists.

YA programmers at the PLCMC have also had success with programs designed for a larger audience. The library used an LSCA grant in 1977 to strengthen basic YA collections

in all the branches and promote their use through a massive program "16 WAYS to Read Your Summer." The popular Top-40 radio station WAYS co-sponsored the event, which guaranteed a full scale, high powered promotion campaign. The repetitive use of 16 emphasized 16 branches, the 16 books to be read to receive the prize of a record album, and reversed the radio station's frequency of 61. Punch-cards with rules on the back were used to keep track of the books read. When a teenager had read 16 books, a library staffer would validate the card which could then be traded for an album at program's end.

The library targeted rising seventh-graders and reached 4000 students in 55 schools with 55 visits to promote the program. While heaviest response was in that age group, a total of 2600 junior high and high schoolers started the program and received cards. Of the 747 (28.7%) students who completed the 16 books, 629 (84.2% of those who finished) went on to claim their record. Program evaluation concluded that to read 16 books was too much for most teens, and when dealing with outside agencies, it is best to get commitments in writing. "16 WAYS to Read Your Summer" won ALA's John Cotton Dana Award, the Charlotte Public Relations Society's Infinity Award, and received an Honorable Mention in the Women in Communications' distinguished Clarion Award competition.

Planning is Important

Careful planning determines the success of any library program.

1. Target your audience—whom do you want to attract?
2. Direct promotion efforts to your targeted audience.
3. Set goals and objectives—what do you want to achieve with this program?
4. Bring staff into program planning, especially if they will play a part in its presentation.
5. Bring outside agencies or local resource people in to broaden the program's credibility and appeal.
6. Keep good statistics.
7. Evaluate the program—how could you improve the program?

Finally, where does one get ideas for programs? The primary source is the young adult community; they know what kinds of programs they would like to attend. Ask your teen

patrons, ask your teen volunteers, circulate questionnaires, form a Young Adult Advisory Council. The movement to enlist youth as advisors in library planning is a strong one. Indeed, the Young Adult Services Division President's Program at the 1982 ALA convention in Philadelphia presented "Guidelines for Youth Participation in Library Decision Making."

What: Youth participation in libraries is involvement of young adults in responsible action and significant decision making which affects the design and delivery of library and information services for their peers and the community.

Why: Youth participation in library decision making is important as a means of achieving more responsive and effective library and information service for this age group. It is even more important as an experience through which young adults can enhance their learning, personal development, citizenship, and transition to adulthood.

How: Youth participation in library decision making requires that adults (librarians, administrators, members of governing and advisory bodies) recognize that young adults can make a positive contribution, and that adults respect the right of young adults to participate in decisions on matters that affect them.

For example, the Durham County Public Library recently formed a Youth Advisory Council to assist in selection of materials, suggest program ideas, and to identify service needs. The Youth Advisory Council has already surpassed initial expectations and is now preparing a "Hot-Line" directory bookmark for area teens. Sarah Harris, Coordinator of the State Youth Council at the Youth Involvement Office in Raleigh, can provide practical guidance in starting such a group.²

Two publications are also good sources of programming ideas. VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates), a bimonthly publication edited by Dorothy M. Broderick and Mary K. Chelton, primarily reviews new YA materials but also includes innovative program ideas.³ GRASSROOTS for High Risk Librarians is published by the NCLA Public Library Section Young Adult Committee. Research in the back issues of GRASSROOTS provided descriptions of the YA programs mentioned in this article. Aimed at both public and school librarians who work with young adults, the publication includes bibliographies, film reviews, and irreverent articles on such topics as censorship, pop culture, and library education. GRASSROOTS is free to North Carolina residents.⁴

Programming for teens need not be difficult, expensive, or intimidating. Ask your young adults what programs they want, then help with their presentation. Patrons who participate in library decision-making as teens tend to remain library supporters as adults. There are several other useful publications to read in planning programs.⁵

References

1. The Center for Early Adolescence, *Common Focus: an exchange of information about early adolescence* 2:1, (January 1980), p.4.
2. Sarah Harris, State Youth Council Coordinator, Youth Involvement Office, N. C. Department of Administration, 121 W. Jones Street, Raleigh, N. C. 27611.
3. *Voice of Youth Advocates* (VOYA), P. O. Box 6569, University, AL 35486.
4. GRASSROOTS for High Risk Librarians, c/o Patrice Ebert, Sharon Branch Library, 6518 Fairview Road, Charlotte, N. C. 28210.
5. Three of these include Margaret A. Edwards, *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts: The library and the young adult*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1974; JoAnn V. Rogers (ed.), *Libraries and Young Adults: media, services, and librarianship*. Littleton, Co: Libraries Unlimited, 1979; and ALA - YASD Services Development Committee. *Directions for Library Service to Young Adults*, Chicago: ALA, 1977.