

Analyzing a Teen Area

Before making any changes or additions to a teen area, take an *inventory* as well as a list the *pluses* and *minuses* of the space. Bear in mind - there are always positives, regardless of how bleak things seem. To better assist you, a complete inventory checklist can be found in *Teen Spaces: The Step-by-Step Library Makeover* (ALA, 2003). In the meantime, here are some *quick* and *easy* questions to consider:

THE Question: Have teens been involved in planning, designing, and maintaining their library space?

THE Answer: Strive to answer yes, yes, and yes!!! This is how to achieve true success.

Floor Plan, Layout, Location

- How much square footage is dedicated to teens? How does it relate to the square footage of the entire public library / school facility?
- Where is the teen area / school library in relationship to other departments, front entrance, etc.?
- Is the floor plan adaptable with room for experimentation?
- Is there space for teens to be social without disturbing others? Are there good site lines to staff areas?
- Is the space multi-functional? Is it clearly defined by purpose (i.e., independent and group study, computing, casual reading, socializing, etc.)?

Furniture, Fixtures, Accessories

- What furniture is currently being used?
- What types of furniture are available for group seating? individual use?
- Is furniture visually appealing and teen-friendly? Are both lounge and study-type furnishings comfortable? Are pieces flexible / adaptable for multiple uses?
- Are fixtures (i.e., shelves, spinner racks, display units) “make do” or truly functional?
- Does the existing furniture and fixtures arrangement impede service or enhance it?
- Are walls, support pillars, and ceilings used effectively?
- Are accessories (3-D objects, plants, art, posters, etc.) being utilized?
- How can furniture, fixtures, and accessories increase look and feel, usability, promotion of services?

Lighting, Flooring, Ceilings

- Is a combination of lighting types used (fluorescent, ambient, natural, etc.)?
- Is lighting practical as well as decorative?
- Is flooring practical, attractive, and even “comfortable”?
- Is there any creative attention given to ceilings, windows, and other architectural features?

Collections, Displays, Signage

- How would you categorize the selection and variety of teen and teen-related materials?
- Are formats other than books offered (i.e., magazines, audiovisual collections, etc.)?
- Are materials attractive and up-to-date or outdated and worn?
- Can materials be easily browsed? Are they grouped by genre? Are spine labels used?
- Are thematic displays utilized? Are they age-appropriate?
- Are face-out merchandising and/or other merchandising techniques used?
- Is signage visually appealing, proportionate in scale, understandable? Can and do signs get teens to where they need to go? Does signage assist in effective marketing?

Technology, Customer Service

- Are there computers in or near the teen area?
- Are any other forms of technology available (i.e. listening stations, TV, gaming equipment)?
- Is the library’s teen webpage dynamic, up-to-date, visually attractive?
- Where can teens find staff assistance when they’re in the library? Is help close by / easily accessible?
- Are **all** staff friendly and helpful to teen patrons?