



## **Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth**

According to a 1995 Department of Education report, public high school enrollment was expected to increase by 13% between 1997 and 2007. This increase will have a great impact on all types of libraries that serve young adults, ages 12 through 18. The need for more librarians to serve young adults is obvious. The best libraries will seize the opportunity to cultivate the increasing numbers of young adults as lifelong library partners and users.

The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), has developed a set of competencies for librarians serving young adults. Individuals who demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by the competencies will be able to provide quality library service in collaboration with teenagers. Institutions adopting these competencies will necessarily improve overall service capacities and increase public value to their respective communities.

These competencies were developed in 1981, revised in 1998, and again in 2003 to include principles of positive youth development as they promote developmentally significant assets through excellent library service. Directors and trainers use them as a basis for staff development opportunities. They can also be used by school administrators and human resources directors to create evaluation instruments, determine staffing needs, and develop job descriptions.

The audiences for the competencies include:

- Library Educators
- Graduate Students
- Young Adult Specialists
- School Library Media Specialists
- Generalists in Public Libraries
- School Administrators
- Library Directors
- State and Regional Library Directors
- Human Resources Directors
- Non-library youth services providers
- Library grants administrators
- Youth advocacy institutions
- Youth services funding sources

### **Area I - Leadership and Professionalism**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Develop and demonstrate leadership skills in identifying the unique needs of young adults and advocating for service excellence, including equitable funding and staffing levels relative to those provided adults and children
2. Exhibit planning and evaluating skills in the development of a comprehensive program for and with young adults.
3. Develop and demonstrate a commitment to professionalism.
  - a. Adhere to the American Library Association Code of Ethics.
  - b. Model and promote a non-judgmental attitude toward young adults.
  - c. Preserve confidentiality in interactions with young adults.
4. Plan for personal and professional growth and career development through active participation in professional associations and continuing education.
5. Develop and demonstrate a strong commitment to the right of young adults to have physical and intellectual access to information that is consistent with the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of and a respect for diverse cultural and ethnic values.
7. Encourage young adults to become lifelong library users by helping them to discover what libraries offer, how to use library resources, and how libraries can assist them in actualization of their overall growth and development.
8. Develop and supervise formal youth participation, such as a teen advisory groups, recruitment of teen volunteers, and opportunities for employment.
9. Affirm and reinforce the role of library school training to expose new professionals to the practices and skills of serving young adults.
10. Model commitment to building assets in youth in order to develop healthy, successful young adults.

## **Area II - Knowledge of Client Group**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Design and implement programs and build collections appropriate to the needs of young adults.
2. Acquire and apply factual and interpretative information on youth development, developmental assets, and popular culture in planning for materials, services and programs for young adults.
3. Acquire and apply knowledge of adolescent literacy, aliteracy (the choice not to read) and of types of reading problems in the development of collections and programs for young adults.
4. Develop services based on sound models of youth participation and development.
5. Develop programs that create community among young adults, allow for social interaction, and give young adults a sense of belonging and bonding to libraries.

## **Area III - Communication**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Form appropriate professional relationships with young adults, providing them with the assets, inputs and resiliency factors that they need to develop into caring, competent adults.
2. Demonstrate effective interpersonal relations with young adults, administrators, other professionals who work with young adults, and the community at large by:

- a. Using principles of group dynamics and group process.
- b. Establishing regular channels of communication (both written and oral) with each group.
- c. Developing partnerships with community agencies to best meet the needs of young adults.
3. Be a positive advocate for young adults before library administration and the community, promoting the need to acknowledge and honor the rights of young adults to receive quality and respectful library service at all levels.
4. Effectively promote the role of the library in serving young adults; that the provision of services to this group can help young adults build assets, achieve success, and in turn, create a stronger community.
5. Develop effective methods of internal communication to increase awareness of young adult services.

## **IV - Administration**

### **A. PLANNING**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Develop a strategic plan for library service with young adults based on their unique needs.
  - a. Formulate goals, objectives, and methods of evaluation for young adult service based on determined needs.
  - b. Design and conduct a community analysis and needs assessment.
  - c. Apply research findings towards the development and improvement of young adult library services.
  - d. Design, conduct, and evaluate local action research for service improvement.
  - e. Design activities to involve young adults in planning and decision-making.
  - f. Develop strategies for working with other libraries and learning institutions.
2. Design, implement, and evaluate ongoing public relations and report programs directed toward young adults, administrators, boards, staff, other agencies serving young adults, and the community at large.
3. Identify and cooperate with other youth serving agencies in networking arrangements that will benefit young adult users.
4. Develop, justify, administer, and evaluate a budget for young adult services.
5. Develop physical facilities dedicated to the achievement of young adult service goals.
6. Develop written policies that mandate the rights of young adults to equitable library service.

### **B. MANAGING**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Contribute to the orientation, training, supervision and evaluation of other staff members in implementing excellent customer service practices.

2. Design, implement and evaluate an ongoing program of professional development for all staff, to encourage and inspire continual excellence in service to young adults.
3. Develop policies and procedures based upon and reflective of the needs and rights of young adults for the efficient operation of all technical functions, including acquisition, processing, circulation, collection maintenance, equipment supervision, and scheduling of young adult programs.
4. Identify and seek external sources of support for young adult services.
5. Monitor and disseminate professional literature pertinent to young adults, especially material impacting youth rights.
6. Demonstrate the capacity to articulate relationships between young adult services and the parent institution's core goals and mission.
7. Exhibit creativity and resourcefulness when identifying or defending resources to improve library service to young adults, be they human resources, material, facility, or fiscal. This may include identifying and advocating for the inclusion of interested paraprofessionals into the direct service mix.
8. Document program experience and learning so as to contribute to institutional and professional memory.
9. Implement mentoring methods to attract, develop, and train staff working with young adults.
10. Promote awareness of young adult services strategic plan, goals, programs and services among other library staff and in the community.
11. Develop and manage services that utilize the skills, talents and resources of young adults in the school or community.

## **V – Knowledge of Materials**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Insure that the parent institution's materials policies and procedures support and integrate principles of excellent young adult service.
2. In collaboration with young adults, formulate collection development, selection, and weeding policies for all young adult materials, as well as other materials of interest to young adults.
3. Employing a broad range of selection sources, develop a collection of materials with young adults that encompasses all appropriate formats, including materials in emerging technologies, languages other than English, and at a variety of reading skill levels.
4. Demonstrate a knowledge and appreciation of literature for and by young adults.
5. Identify current reading, viewing, and listening interests of young adults and incorporate these findings into collection development strategies as well as events and programs.
6. Design and produce materials (such as finding aids and other formats) to expand access to collections.
7. Maintain awareness of ongoing technological advances and develop a facility with electronic resources.
8. Serve as a resource expert and a consultant when teachers are making the transition from textbook-centered instruction to resource-based instruction.

## **Area VI – Access to Information**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Assess the developmental needs and interests of young adults in the community in order to provide the most appropriate resources and services.
2. Organize collections to maximize easy, equitable, and independent access to information by young adults.
3. Use current standard methods of cataloging and classification, as well as incorporate the newest and creative means of access to information.
4. Create an environment that attracts and invites young adults to use the collection.
5. Develop special tools that maximize access to information not readily available, (e.g., community resources, special collections, youth-produced literature, and links to useful websites).
6. Employ promotional methods and techniques that will increase access and generate collection usage.
7. Through formal and informal instruction, ensure that young adults gain the skills they need to find, evaluate, and use information effectively.
8. Create an environment that guarantees equal access to buildings, resources, programs and services for young adults.
9. Develop and use effective measures to manage internet and other electronic resources that provide young adults with equal access.
10. Develop and maintain collections that follow the best practices of merchandising.

## **Area VII - Services**

*The librarian will be able to:*

1. Together with young adults, design, implement and evaluate programs and services within the framework of the strategic plan and based on the developmental needs of young adults and the public assets libraries represent.
2. Utilize a variety of relevant and appropriate techniques (e.g., booktalking, discussion groups, etc.) to encourage young adult use of all types of materials.
3. Provide opportunities for young adults to direct their own personal growth and development.
4. Identify and plan services with young adults in non-traditional settings, such as hospitals, home-school settings, alternative education and foster care programs, and detention facilities.
5. Provide librarian-assisted and independent reference service to assist young adults in finding and using information.
6. Provide a variety of informational and recreational services to meet the diverse needs and interests of young adults.
7. Instruct young adults in basic information gathering and research skills. These should include the skills necessary to use, evaluate, and apply electronic information sources to insure current and future information literacy.
8. Promote activities that increasingly build strengthen information literacy skills, and develop life-long learning habits.

9. Actively involve young adults in planning and implementing services and programs for their age group through advisory boards, task forces, and by less formal means (i.e., surveys, one-on-one discussion, focus groups, etc.)
9. Develop partnerships and collaborations with other organizations that serve young adults.
10. Implement customer service practices that encourage and nurture positive relationships between young adults, the library, staff and administration.

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