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YALSA Trends Paper at ALA 2015 Midwinter Meeting
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Title

Designing the library of the future for and with teens: Librarians as the "Connector" in connected learning

Abstract

The Future of Library Services for and with Teens Report (http://www.ala.org/yaforum/future-library-services-and-teens-project-report) calls for reimagining the position of libraries to promote the three spheres of learning among digital youth (interest driven, peer-supported and academically-oriented) as described in the connected learning model. Digitally excluded youth, who often come from low socio-economic backgrounds, immigrant families and minority groups struggle to formulate these connections as access, literacy and support from adult mentors are often lacking, compared to their privileged counterparts. To build librarians' capacity to encourage connected learning among the digitally excluded, librarians will need to offer programs and services that meet these youth where they are at, and inspire them to push their current boundaries of learning. Surveys, interviews, and forming a youth advisory council are no longer sufficient when designing youth programs. Instead, it is time to involve the young people themselves as co-designers.

In this paper presentation, the author will present an analysis of methods used to design learning technologies and programs in areas such as learning sciences, human-computer interaction, and public health, which in turn can be adopted to design library programs, space, and services for digitally excluded youth. A thorough examination of two decades of research literature on participatory design approaches used in various fields yields numerous methods that have potential for librarians. These include cooperative inquiry, bonded design inquiry, participatory action, community-based participation, group storytelling, persona exercises, and others.   More specifically, the author will highlight how these methods allow seamless exploration into the spheres of the connected learning model. The analysis also generates concrete recommendations on how to execute these methods with youth, through the sharing of potential use-case scenarios. Attendees will leave the presentation with techniques they can use to design the library of the future for and with teens.