

Keep Them Coming Back for More

Follow these suggestions to get teens to return to the library

BY KAREN JENSEN

Let's assume that you've done the research, created your space, hosted the programs, and done the work. With all of that in mind, this installment of Teen Services 101 will answer the most important question: What will make the teens who walk into your library keep coming back?

They must find something they need, want, or value.

This one's pretty obvious. If teens don't find anything of interest, they're not returning. Not all teens are the same, so we must offer a variety of things to do. This takes an investment of space, time, resources, staff, and money. Some things that teens are looking for include books, information, access to the Internet, a safe space to be social, and fun programming.

They must feel valued and respected by the library and its staff.

By staff, I mean *all* staff. From the moment they walk through the door to the moment they leave, teens need to be treated well. It's not enough to have a dedicated teen librarian who re-

spects and values them. If a teen goes to check out and has a bad interaction at the circulation desk, all of our work can be undone.

It's important that we work with all staff to break down bias, provide customer service training, and build positive opinions about teenagers in the library.

At one of my former libraries, there was a staff member who loathed teens.

She made a point every day of positioning herself by the back entrance at exactly the moment they

came into the library after school to give them the stink eye. It took a lot of work to undo the damage she had done. It was also a lot of work trying to dismantle her biases against teens so she would change her behavior.

Library administration should set high standards for customer service to *all* library patrons and train staff to meet those standards, holding them accountable if they don't. Everything done behind the scenes is undone and every dollar invested is wasted if we aren't providing good customer service.

They must have an overall positive experience.

Like everyone else, teenagers are more likely to remember and talk about negative experiences, which can be shared on social media with hundreds of people in an instant.

The only control we have is to do our part to make sure our young patrons have positive experiences.

You need administration buy-in and support, you need every staff member to support your work by treating teen patrons well, and you need the infrastructure to help get it done.

Advocating for teens and teen services, and helping to put these elements into place is a big part of the job. It takes knowledge, passion, and dedication to make all this happen.

It all starts with you, the teen librarian, but it doesn't end there.

See all of the "Teen Librarian Toolbox" Teen Services 101 posts at teenlibrarian-toolbox.com/teen-services-101.

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A Wild Celebration for Fuse 8 n' Kate

ON JULY 1, our podcast *Fuse 8 n' Kate* officially became a *SLJ* property. In anticipation, we've been cleaning up our act a bit. Our episodes are now a tight 30 minutes. We'll be having more guest stars as well.

For this special episode, we came face-to-face with the great Maurice Sendak's

masterpiece *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Does it deserve its everlasting fame and glory? Find out for yourself as Kate and I pick the darn thing apart. I am intrigued by Kate's theory that this isn't a wolf suit at all, but rather a tailored cat suit.

I like the idea that the mom was asked by Max for a wolf

suit, purchased this, and then made a wolf-like tail. She doesn't get enough credit for her tailoring skills.

Listen to the show, and all episodes, at bit.ly/2JFPevO on Soundcloud or download it through iTunes, Stitcher, Google Play, PlayerFM, or your preferred method of podcast selection.—Elizabeth Bird

