

TEEN LIBRARIAN

Monthly

Vol. 1 No. 7

Editor: Matthew Imrie

November 2006

Editorial

Welcome to the seventh edition of TLM – my first from my new position in Enfield. This month we take a look at the creation of a Teen Library Service website courtesy of Eileen Brock of Norfolk Library Services as well as two event reviews and a blurb about my final TRG at Thamesmead Library. There is also the usual 'Adult books for Teens' section, this month focusing on humour books. You will find two important questions at the end of the newsletter that will impact on the future of the website so please take a look at them and if relevant to you respond to them.

--

Event Reviews

Stoneheart book launch event

On Wednesday October 11th I was fortunate to attend an event hosted in central London by Hodder Children's Books to launch the fantastic debut novel *Stoneheart* by Charlie Fletcher. The event had a real buzz of excitement as an eclectic mix of publishers and school and public librarians, as well as young people, converged upon the Royal Institute of British Architects to meet the author, peruse the novel and of course listen to the man himself in conversation with Jonathan Douglas. Mr Fletcher proved to be an accomplished raconteur and gave an entertaining insight into his background and the experiences that have helped to shape the novel.

If this event is anything to go on, Mr Fletcher promises to be an exciting new voice in the world of children's publishing. The novel itself is firmly rooted in the architectural history of London and upon the strikingly original idea that the statues of London can come alive. The first in a trilogy by this Hollywood screenwriter, it has already been optioned for development for the movies. Written initially for his own children I feel certain that this novel will find a wide audience.

<http://www.meettheauthor.co.uk/bookbites/1303.html>

SP

Reads like Teen Spirit

A mix of Librarians and people in the book trade descended upon the University of London Union to listen to Scott Westerfeld, Sherry Ashworth and Sophie McKenzie in conversation with Damian Kelleher.

The evening was relaxed with the authors speaking about their experiences in writing and then reading a segment from one of their books. There was also a Q&A session at the end of the talk and then they signed copies of their books (which seemed to take longer than the talk itself). Sherry Ashworth is the author that was interviewed for this month's Eight Questions with... section.



Sherry Ashworth, Sophie McKenzie & Scott Westerfeld

--

Adult books for Teens

Humour books can be great for attracting teens to the library. They look great on display shelves and send a positive message that your collections are about more than heavy-duty novels and life issues non-fiction. However the market for humour books often seems skewed towards an older audience, making it hard to find teen friendly titles. Here are a few picks you might like to try on your teenage customers:

Don't Tell Mum: Hair-raising Messages Home From Gap Year Travellers by Simon Hoggart (Atlantic, 2006)

Funny, moving and surprising, this book presents the big wide world through the eyes of teenage gap year travellers writing home to their parents with tales of adventure and misadventure. This

amusing title collects genuine email correspondence, so appeals both as humour and a slice of real teenage life.

PostSecret by Frank Warren (Orion, 2006)

A surprising phenomenon, PostSecret presents Frank Warren's project that asked people to send him an anonymous secret or confession that they'd never told anyone else before. In under a year 10,000 of Frank's postcards were returned to him and they make for fascinating and funny reading. Great for older teens 16+.

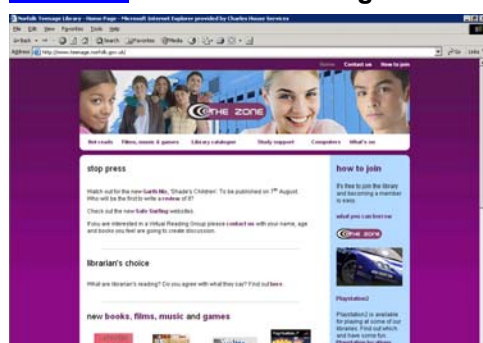
Flanimals of the Deep by Ricky Gervais (Faber, 2006)

The latest Flanimals book explores an undersea world of crazy creatures. Designed as if it were a children's book, but intentionally appealing to adults and teens, your younger customers will love this because of its Ricky Gervais connection and because it's genuinely funny and full of colourful images! PF

--

Technology

The Zone – Norfolk's Teenage Website



Problems of corporate image in relation to websites are well known but as Norfolk County Council planned to have separate "channels of communication" with our younger audiences, it was accepted that they would look different. As NCC were not at the stage of being able to create their designs at the point we wanted our websites updated, it was agreed that we in libraries could go ahead with our own interim designs on the understanding that we would come in line with any corporate designs when finally established. We knew this would be at least two years off, and if our website was successful, elements could be incorporated in the new corporate styles. We will get good use from our designs and after two years they will be due for a refresh anyway. So we were lucky that we never actually had to argue the case for different design and colours.

2

We did have to make an internal case about the funding and maintenance of the websites though.

The current version of the website was designed by netXtra after input from a small group of librarians plus IT staff on what we wanted to see included in the design. netXtra then produced a version for us to test. This was shown to groups of young people across the county for their views. As well as the design they were asked about what the content should include, Audio/Visual and Study Information were mentioned often.

The content changes on a regular basis, especially on the home page so that it looks fresh. It is a continually evolving site with pages being added or taken away as well as changed. For instance we introduced the Librarians Choice recently. The site is a mix of the serious, Safe-Surfing websites, and fun, the book bin, with images used where possible.

Hot Reads are chosen from the new stock bought by our children's stock buying team. Book jackets are included most of the time as we have obtained permissions from many publishers to use the jackets, also one of our suppliers has said we can take images from their website.

For book & A/V reviews we ask for a name and library, but this is not compulsory. Some people put their nicknames and some nothing at all. The wording and spelling of the review is not corrected. We do not publish anything that is racist, sexist, defamatory etc. Reviewers receive the message 'if accepted it will appear on the website shortly'.

Currency is very important, especially where events are concerned having to remove them as soon as possible afterwards. Time spent on the website varies each week depending on what is being changed. Keeping things current will only take an hour or so, but redoing the Hot Reads or the A/V could take half a day. Every now and again the links to other websites need to be checked to make sure they haven't changed.

Feedback is very important so there is a page where comments can be submitted. All comments are considered and acted on if possible.

With our teen website we are reaching young people who would not enter a library building. They are able to access

library services in a way that is appropriate to them, and see that libraries are not necessarily boring and that librarians can be fun!

Thank you to the Teen Librarian for choosing Norfolk's Teen website as website of the month for June and for giving us the chance to write this.

If anyone would like to know more then please contact me:
eileen.brock@norfolk.gov.uk
01603 439981

EB

Halloween TRG



John Harris with his books at the Thamesmead TRG

On the 31st October 2006 the Junior Library at Thamesmead was unnaturally quiet and dark. The only light being provided by two flickering Jack O' Lanterns, the noise when it came was a scream of terror and then nervous laughter from 18 teens – aged from 11 – 16.

I had booked John Harris to come in for a Halloween Spectacular for my Teenage Reading Group a year ago; this event marked his third appearance in Thamesmead and my final one as Librarian and organiser of the Thamesmead TRG. Watching John spin his brand of magic is truly amazing, his voice drops and the audience leans in closer to hear as the story progresses and at the denouement he raises his voice – prompting the screams.

He interacted effortlessly with the group and chatted about stories he had told at past TRG events and answered questions about storytelling. At the end of the story session there was a lucky draw with eight signed copies of his books being given away as prizes.

Over the past three years and nine months John has been the most talked-about and popular visitor to the TRG. He is one of the best (if not the best) storytellers in the UK today. You can visit his website at: <http://www.johnharristhestoryteller.com/>

--
Why did the vampire take an art book out of the library?

He wanted to learn how to draw blood!

Website questions

Sharing experience

Would any Librarians around the country that run Teen Groups or organise programming for Teens be interested in having their events be used as examples of good practice?

There has been some interest from Librarians who would like to visit Libraries where Teen events take place and seeing how they run. So, if you run a Teen Group and are happy with the idea of having people visiting and seeing how it is done could you please email me at editor@teenlibrarian.co.uk and I will compile a list and make it available to all interested parties.

Teen space

Poll time – This one is for any Librarians that run Teenage Reading Groups or any other Teen Groups in their Libraries.

I have been putting plans together for upgrading and adding new features to the teenlibrarian website in the New Year. One of the ideas currently under discussion is opening up a sub-domain that will allow Groups to post reviews of books, magazines, manga and movies as well as interacting with other TRGs around the country.

Question: would you make use of this service if it were provided?

Please send all responses to: editor@teenlibrarian.co.uk

Submissions

If anyone would like to submit an article or idea for inclusion in the newsletter, please send it to editor@teenlibrarian.co.uk

Eight Questions with... Sherry Ashworth

Q1. What made you decide to write for Teenagers?

I was approached by a publisher to write fiction for teenagers – I was already an established adult novelist. But once I'd finished my first YA novel, I realised I enjoyed writing for teenagers far more than writing for adults – all the best novels are about teenagers, anyway. And a good YA novel must be both gripping and thought-provoking – and that's what I try to be.

Q2. How do you get into the heads of your characters?

Partly through observing teens – I taught for many years in secondary schools and my own daughters are in their early twenties. But also – and mostly – by pulling it out of myself. I can remember being a teenager very, very clearly – I was much happier as a teenager than as a child – and I think I may not have grown up very much since then! I love cutting edge music, fashion, reality TV – I think I've yet to reach the age of majority!

Q3. Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

I wish! I'm learning all the time. But the truth is that teenagers – just like adults – are all different from one another – and what will appeal to some teenagers will not appeal to others. I'm learning who my readers are and the sort of issues, approaches and stories that interest them – but unless the stories interest me too, I won't write them!

Q4. What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

I look at the clock on my desk ... I'm like, Omigod! One whole hour has passed and I didn't realise! I read over what I've just written and get this lovely, tingly feeling because I know it's good – it's what I meant to say. I've managed to tell the truth as I see it. And I don't even remember writing those words – never realised they'd work ... This happens about once every three months or so! But when you have a good day, it's better than chocolate.

Q5. Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

I certainly DO read other authors – I love teen fiction. I've been inspired by Melvin Burgess, admire Paul Magrs, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Mal Peet – and so many more.

Q6. Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

No – thankfully my own life is so boring as to be totally devoid of interest. And as a teenager I worked hard at school, read loads, and was boy-obsessed – and loved David Bowie. None of these things are reflected in my novels, which are all about teens facing problems, sometimes of their own making. I was a good girl! My characters misbehave. See answer to next question ...

Q7. What are you working on at the moment?

At the moment I am working on Revolution – it's about a bunch of kids taking over their school – a kind of real life Animal Farm.

Q8. Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with your or your agent about it?

Yes – I love them! One of the best things about writing for teenagers is meeting them and listening to what they have to say. The best way to contact me is through my website www.sherryashworth.com. I live in Manchester but am happy to travel anywhere in the country – and beyond!

Contributors: Matthew Imrie, Paul Fisher, Sue Prior and Eileen Brock. With special thanks to Sherry Ashworth for giving up his time to answer the eight questions.