

TEEN LIBRARIAN

Monthly

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Editorial

Welcome to the final Teen Librarian Monthly for 2006! First some subscriber news: as of this month TLM is now being read by over 200 subscribers in over five countries around the world.

This month's newsletter features a list of adult DVDs that may do better in the Teen section, two pieces on Teen Library events in Wiltshire and Bexley, some news on Graphic Novels, an Eragon competition and an interview with American YA author Peter Hautman. In closing I would like to thank everyone who contributed articles to the newsletter this year and remind everyone that reads TLM that all articles and ideas for improving the newsletter are welcome.

Adult DVDs for Teens

If you keep up with current thinking on teenage service development, you may be aware that mixed media is proposed by many as a way forward in collection development. Many libraries separate their children's DVDs from their adult sections, but few are bold enough to isolate some just for teens, let alone display them alongside their teen books. If you're feeling bold, here are a few suggestions for some titles that might set the tone. No blockbusters here, just a few titles you might already have that might move better in a teens section than they do currently in adult sections. Stand these alongside your books for older teens and use these suggestions as a guide to selecting other titles.

The Ring (cert 15)

A classic of Asian horror cinema. Though remade in Hollywood with the same title and a similar plot, nothing stands close to this original with its creepy dark tone, Japanese cultural references and the cult figure of Sadako, the demon child at the heart of the movie and its sequels. Great for fans of manga, anime and those seeking something edgy and cool.

The Notebook (cert 15)

The ultimate romance movie for today's teens, especially girls. As straightforward

as love stories get, but it's the simplicity that provides the draw as it serves as the background for classic characterisations and an atmospheric setting. Hugely popular with teens already and sure to find an audience with your younger customers as well as serving as a reminder that this movie is based on a great novel.

Kung Fu Hustle (cert 15)

One of the most visually inventive movies ever made and one of the few Hong Kong productions of recent years to attract a fairly major release. Despite being relatively well known, the unique style of star Stephen Chow makes this movie cool beyond belief. This shouts out your commitment to giving the kids what they want.

Donnie Darko (cert 15)

Edgy and weird - this modern cult classic is a tribute to the mixed up dark side of youth. It's also a creative and intriguing film and one that should grace any collection that dares try to be cool.

Example of a Good Practitioner: Lucy Kitchener

I never intended to work in a Library – I fell into it when I got a job as an *Outreach Worker* with 16-25's for Stockport Library Service after working with homeless and vulnerably-housed young people in Oxford. I have a passion for reading and books and quite quickly got a buzz from discussing books with children and young people.

My first post in Stockport was as part of a Reader Development project managed by *Time to Read*, the North West Libraries Book Promotion Partnership. The two projects, *Reading Lifelines* and

Everybody's Reading, were funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge

Fund from September 2000 to September 2002. It was a regional project involving 16-25 year olds living in the Northwest. We wanted to engage with the age group using youth work techniques in order to encourage them to develop their reading and make use of their local libraries.

During the project I developed and ran 12 events with and for young people. This included things like *Changing Rooms* weekends with graffiti artwork by young people, a series of relaxation workshops for a young parent's group, storytelling sessions for young parents, author visits and an *Optical Sounds* Music Creation Workshop. These projects were undertaken in partnership with, for example, Millennium Volunteers and Youth Services. I also had project management responsibilities for public library services to young people drawing up guidelines and supporting local staff with specific projects.

I enjoyed working in library services so much that I qualified as a Librarian in 2002 and gained my Chartership in 2004. Currently I'm employed as an *Area Children's and Young Person's Librarian* in Wiltshire.

Most of my current work is with children and teenagers from tiny babies to 16-year olds. I work closely with and in primary and secondary schools; setting up class visits programmes, involving schools with the Chippenham Festival, delivering presentations in assemblies and storytelling. I've secured funding to ensure the continuation of a homework club. I've set up a project taking books to travellers. I've even run a speed-dating event for Local Democracy Week with local Councillors and young people!

Thanks to inspiration from the *Children's Librarian* in Salisbury, I have run two mini Street-Festivals in Chippenham. It's a chance for teenagers to find out what's happening in the area. Preparations begin 6 months before: it's a long slog ringing people, writing letters, ringing people to confirm, ringing to re-confirm. And it's the last few weeks when things really start moving: it's an odd feeling standing in front of hundreds of bored, giggling teenagers to try and excite them about the local library...suffice to say I go bright red from embarrassment several times. In 2004 we had 60 young people attend and I was hoping for 80-100 in 2005 so it was with huge delight that we checked the people counter and saw it was reading 436 at the

end of the night! Even if you think every teenager may have gone in and out, we're sure we had at least 250 young people turn up. It's always noisy and full of laughter.

I've run a fantastic Library Mela, a celebration of Asian arts and culture with storytelling, music, demonstrations and refreshments. It brought in over 200 people from the local community.

I was instrumental in setting up a town steering group to work positively with teenagers and accessed training for local staff. I set up a working group to manage anti-social behaviour consisting of the local police, the anti-social behaviour reduction officer, the local schools and the town council. I also identified and ran training with the local Primary Care Trust for staff on assertiveness skills to provide a better service for young people in the community.

I've encountered several problems time and again during my work within libraries. The partners I worked with during the projects were all enthusiastic about what library services have to offer for young people and keen to develop joint working projects, however, creating partnerships sometimes proves impossible, as organisations lack the staff and time to do so. The workers involved often only work part-time hours and are juggling many different priorities, lacking the necessary resources to support the work. It can be difficult to ensure things get off the ground. Any work targeting teenagers, needs, in an ideal world, a full-time dedicated library worker to make things happen that can be sustained and are not just temporary achievements.

Difficulties arise when working with staff, with some staff expressing concerns about working with teenagers. Small staff teams find it difficult to fully engage with projects due to staff shortages and a lack of time. On a more positive note, in some libraries working groups of staff form voluntarily to drive projects forward showing great enthusiasm and commitment. The lack of ownership by staff for any projects aimed for teenagers is due to a myriad of complex reasons, I believe. I have learnt that proper management support is needed so that staff can understand the importance of segmenting a market and what is expected of them.

One of the main problems, inevitably, can be lack of take-up by the target group. I have learnt a lot about activities that work, and those that don't, marketing to the age-

group and working with challenging behaviour.

Even with changing priorities, budget constraints, staff shortages and not enough time (the usual complaints of any professional in the library world methinks), working with children and teenagers continues to inspire me. I have a huge passion for reading and books and get a huge buzz from discussing books with children and young people. I'm never doing the same thing day-in, day-out. It's totally creative. There's always someone interesting to talk to and share things with. There's nothing quite like finding the right book for the right person, or someone coming back into the library to tell me about something great they've read.

Creative Writing Workshop with Anthony McGowan

On Thursday 30th November, Bexley Libraries were lucky enough to host a visit from top YA author Anthony McGowan, winner of the 2006 Booktrust Teenage Prize for his novel *Henry Tumour*. The event drew a bumper turnout of 24 young people interested in creative writing.

Anthony engaged the young people with stories of his own childhood, then lead the group through an exercise in developing their own stories based on life experiences and imagination. This superb session provided an excellent evening for the lucky youngsters, many of whom were Teenage Reading Group members and Anthony's services come highly recommended if there are any other library services out there looking to attract a dynamic author to excite their teenage customers.

Graphic Novels

Something to look out for

Sixteen years ago Alan Moore (writer of Watchmen, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen and a number of other well-known and ground-breaking graphic novels) started writing a graphic story called *The Lost Girls*. The complete story has finally been published as a graphic novel.

It is a tale about Alice (in Wonderland), Dorothy Gale (from The Wizard of Oz) and Wendy (from Peter Pan) meeting up on the eve of The Great War. The only downside to the book is that it is pornography, well written and exquisitely painted but due to its content is totally unsuitable for a Teen Library collection.

I only mention it in case someone purchases it for the Teen or Graphic Novel collections and gets a nasty shock. Follow this link to read Neil Gaiman's review: <http://www.neilgaiman.com/journal/2006/06/lost-girls-redux.html>

Graphic Novels for Girls

Staying with Graphic Novels for now, it has recently been brought to my attention that DC Comics has launched a Graphic Novel imprint called 'Minx' aimed at girls - <http://www.dccomics.com/news/?nw=6916>

Generation @

Among 13- to 15-year-olds, the web researcher Nielsen/NetRatings says, Piczo was the fastest-growing online brand in the UK last year, with almost half its audience girls under 18. NetRatings reports an active UK membership of 1.5m for Bebo, which also targets schools and colleges in the United States, Australia and Canada. Half are aged 13-19.

MySpace, with close to 50m registered members worldwide, receives more hits than Google in America. In December, the proportion of UK 15- to 22-year-olds visiting MySpace was higher than any other networking brand, NetRatings reports. Indeed, member community sites now attract half the UK net population every month. To pay their way, all the networks rely on targeted banner advertising. On the back of this enormous burst of youthful nectar for advertisers, News Corporation — parent company of The Sunday Times — bought Intermix Media last year, principally for the jewel in its crown, MySpace, which was then scarcely two years old.

Taken from Times Online

<http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,19510-2036033,00.html>

Competition

With the movie version of Eragon being released today I thought it would be fitting to offer a metal 'Eragon' bookmark as a prize to the first person who can tell me the name of Eragon's dragon.

Answers to editor@teenlibrarian.co.uk.

Submissions

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

Eight Questions With... Peter Hautman

Q1. What made you decide to write for Teenagers?

I write books both for adults and teens. My first teen novel, Mr. Was, was originally written as an adult novel. However, when I finished writing it, my agent pointed out that the protagonist was, for most of the story, a teenager. She suggested that we sell the book as a teen novel.

That started me thinking about books for teens, and set off a cascade of memories—not only memories of what it was like to read as a teen, but a cascade of recollections about my teen years. I soon found myself writing a second teen novel, No Limit (published in Britain as Feeling Lucky). I have published seven novels for teens, most recently Rash, a tale set in the “United Safer States of America” circa 2074, when football is illegal, walking helmets are required by law, and obesity is a felony.

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

It’s a skill, much like acting. Some people are better at it than others, but nearly anyone can learn to do it. I prepare for writing like an actor prepares for a role. I spend a lot of time trying to understand why my characters do the things they do, and how they feel about it. That is the most important (and difficult to learn) of all the writing skills.

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

I try to write stories I would have liked when I was a teen. It involves a lot of memory work: Who was I? How have I changed? Why did I do the things I did? Why did I like the things I liked?

I would not call it “hit or miss.” Nor would I characterize it as “instinct.” It is a deliberate and disciplined process.

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

I love the part where I sprawl on the sofa and just let my mind go. But for pure satisfaction, there is nothing like typing those last few words of a story.

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

I don’t read a lot of teen fiction, but recently I have enjoyed books by Philip Reeve and Phillip Pullman. Right now I’m reading Jane Austen, whose novels are arguably teen books, once you get past the archaic language.

Q6 Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

Bits and pieces of my life end up in all my books, but the only one that is directly taken from my life is Godless, a story about some teens who start their own religion worshipping a water tower. That one is nearly autobiographical. I really did start a water tower-worshipping religion. All hail the Ten-Legged One!

Q7 What are you working on at the moment?

I have several projects underway, including a poker novel called All-In, a mystery series (The Bloodwater Mysteries) for younger readers ages 8-12, and an anthology of poker-themed short stories.

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

Yes I do. My agent is Jean Dayton at jean@daytonbookings.com, or you can reach me through my website at <http://www.petehautman.com>