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‘Talk to them like they’re people’: a cross-cultural comparison of teen-centred approaches in public library services

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to observe and analyse cross-cultural examples of public libraries with strong teen services, in order to identify key elements of practice and approach that enable these libraries’ successful and impactful interactions with teenagers. A particular focus is placed on factors that are a matter of mindset rather than of specific facilities, in order to offer these as transferable lessons that can be applied widely, including by smaller libraries and those with fewer resources. A comparative case study was conducted at two locations selected as examples of strong teen services in their respective regions: Lava and TioTretton in Sweden and Tompkins County Public Library in the United States. Data were collected via interviews, observation, and document analysis. Key factors identified as contributing to successful, teen-centred services include: providing a space, no matter how small, that is solely for teens, where they can experience a sense of ownership and belonging; according teens the same respect as any other library visitor; creating a space that is comfortable and actively signals that everyone is welcome; letting teens take the lead, with staff following their interests and serving as facilitators for their projects; creating flexibility in spaces and programming; employing staff who have varied expertise and genuinely enjoy working with young adults; mingling and interacting with visitors; and continually re-evaluating and improving practices.

Keywords

public libraries, young adult library services, teen services, Scandinavia–U.S. cross-cultural comparison, social role of libraries, cultural role of libraries

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teenagers are widely considered to be one of the most difficult populations for public libraries to reach. Library usage often drops off as children age into this demographic (Evjen and Vold, 2018). Additionally, many libraries have limited resources and space to devote to the age group. Teen services are often folded in with children's services, where the bulk of programming is targeted to younger children.

Yet libraries, as non-commercial spaces open to all, are ideally placed within a community to provide creative, educational, and social opportunities for young people. Public libraries as a whole provide crucial social infrastructure, offering a place where people can congregate and develop social ties (Klinenberg, 2018).

This comparative, cross-cultural case study examines examples of public libraries with strong teen services[1] in two regions, Scandinavia and the United States. The aim is to identify key elements of practice and mindset that enable these libraries' successful and impactful interactions with teenagers.

The research examines libraries that work in two different cultural contexts but pursue similar aims of providing teen-centred services, in order to obtain insights that can be applied beyond these two specific contexts. Further, an emphasis is placed on identifying success factors that are a matter of approach rather than of specific facilities or equipment, and thus can be of relevance as recommendations for library practitioners operating teen services at any scale.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Public libraries have long encompassed many roles. They offer information access, reader development, and lifelong educational opportunities, as well as recreation and entertainment. Twenty-first century libraries also work to foster technological skills and digital literacy and to provide equitable access to information resources.

Libraries counteract poverty and social exclusion by providing a convenient, free space where anyone can study, meet, or access information (Mugwisi, Jiyane and Fombad, 2018). People with a lower income and/or education level use libraries as meeting places more frequently, making them an important force in 'equalizing the possibilities of being an active citizen across social and economic differences' (Aabø, Audunson and Vårheim, 2010: p. 25). Public libraries also serve as 'low-intensive meeting places' (Audunson et al., 2007), where residents can encounter friends as well as interact with people from backgrounds different to their own (Audunson, 2016).

Libraries serve as 'third spaces': public spaces that are neither home nor work (or, in the case of teenagers, school), where people gather informally and voluntarily (Oldenburg, 1989). Such spaces foster social capital, which in turn can positively impact many aspects of a community, from democracy to economic development to individual wellbeing (Audunson et al., 2007).

Teenagers are 'notorious for being a difficult user group' to engage in libraries (Hannan, 2011: p. 32). Howard (2011: p. 321) identified 'lack of relationships with library staff, appealing facilities, an appealing teen library Web site, and teen involvement and participation' as major barriers to teens' library use. Many libraries struggle to balance the needs of teens with those of other visitors, or to attract teens in the first place.

Nonetheless, there are many public libraries successfully reaching their teen populations. In examining their practices, certain key topics emerge. Bernier, Males and Rickman (2014: p. 173) found that libraries that incorporated greater youth participation in the design and execution of their teen spaces 'were substantially more likely to report increased youth use of the library'. Agosto (2013: p. 48) advocates viewing teens first and foremost as individuals, rather than primarily as members of their age demographic, and respecting teens 'as the experts of their own thoughts, behaviors, preferences and needs'. This teen-centred approach requires 'going to the source—asking teens questions and *listening*—and then putting the answers to work' (Kunzel and Hardesty, 2006: p. 5).

The intentional design of physical space is another recurring theme.

'Library buildings, like all public spaces, represent and manifest community ideals about who counts and what activities matter' (Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014: p. 165) and teenagers are often left out of this calculation. For example, classic Carnegie library buildings are generally 'bifurcated' into a children's section and an adult section (Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014: p. 166), with teenagers either neglected entirely or crammed into whatever space is left over.

Thus teens often experience libraries as unwelcoming and their resulting lack of interest is misinterpreted by library staff as 'youthful apathy' (Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014: p. 166). Cockett (1998: p. 176, cited in Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014) sums up this dynamic as follows: 'Inviting young people to a library that is architecturally not prepared to handle normal adolescent behavior can have some pretty negative consequences.'

Indeed, questions of space and attitude often intertwine. Lesko (2012: p. 89, p. 178) critiques the 'debilitating and dehumanizing ways' present-day society talks about adolescents, arguing that in both scientific and popular texts, youth are 'usually presumed to be deficient, a little crazy, controlled by hormones'. Representations in news media tend to portray 'youth as an entire demographic as problematic' (Bernier, 2011: p. 162). '[A] major barrier to service is that prejudicial assumptions surrounding adolescents, not research, govern understanding of what "normal adolescent behavior" means' (Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014: p. 166). Libraries unintentionally 'create spaces in which youth are told "no" for doing or wanting things that may be entirely appropriate for young people, such as sitting convivially in small groups' (Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014: p. 167).

For adolescents, social competence is an important part of the maturation process. '[Y]et most public libraries find adolescents in groups difficult to deal with […] and staff energy primarily goes toward controlling them rather than assuming such groups are normal and planning for them' (Chelton, 2002: p. 26). Library services have long been designed according to the preferences of adults, without taking into account the developmental, academic, and personal needs specific to teenagers (Bolan, 2016).

Today, however, many public libraries are examining how they can adapt their services to teenagers, rather than expecting teenagers to adapt to them. Many are broadening their approach 'to focus less on creating great collections and more on helping to create great teen communities'; they view their collections 'as part of a broader set of resources and services together intended to improve the lives of adolescent community members' (Agosto, 2016: p. 346). Increasingly, the focus is 'on what the library *does* over what the library *has*' (Agosto, 2016: p. 344) and on the role of the library as a non-commercial space that encourages interactive use and participation.

Teenagers certainly use public libraries to access books, the Internet, and other information resources. However, other uses go beyond the strictly informational. Teens view the library as a place for engaging in social relationships with both peers and library staff, as well as participating in both official library programming and more informal entertainment (Agosto, 2007). Teenagers also go to the library for the positive atmosphere, whether this means a refuge from an unstable home environment or simply a quiet place to study (Agosto, 2013).

Agosto et al. (2015) analysed the recommendations of teenagers and librarians at a broad sampling of U.S. public libraries and identified five main elements teen spaces should support: physical comfort, leisure activity and information needs, academic activity and information needs, teen space ownership, and effective library policy display and marketing. The Young Adult Library Services Association likewise offers a set of guidelines that emphasise soliciting teen input and creating facilities that are practical and adaptive (American Library Association, 2012).

Furniture that can be flexibly rearranged is an important aspect of physical comfort in a teen library space (Bernier and Males, 2014). Teenagers value having a range of seating options, such as couches, beanbag chairs, and stools, to allow for movement and a variety of postures (Cranz and Cha, 2006). Studies in Sweden have found that preteens value the environment a library offers, such as cosy areas for reading (Hedemark, 2011) and inviting, homey spaces where they can relax (Linnros, 2014).

Just as it is important to allocate space for teens, it is also vital to hire staff who actively like and relate to teens. Likewise, a library administration should support serving teenagers as fully and equitably as other library user populations (Chelton, 2002).

3. METHODOLOGY

Two regions were selected for this comparative case study, based on their relevance to the topic of teen library services: Scandinavia, for its reputation as a source of innovative thinking about libraries, and the United States, as the site of a great deal of current scholarship on teen services.

Potential case study libraries in each region were examined via academic literature and media reports. The adjacent libraries Lava (teen) and TioTretton (preteen) in Stockholm, Sweden, were ultimately selected to serve jointly as the Scandinavian case study. These libraries are sites of innovation that have inspired similar youth-orientated libraries both around the region and further abroad. In the U.S., Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL) in Ithaca, New York, was selected as an example of a public library offering high-quality teen services. Additionally, a year prior to this study TCPL had opened a new teen centre, which presented an opportunity to observe the effects when a library with already strong services introduced a dedicated space for teens.

Unobtrusive, non-participatory direct observation was conducted in each of the case study libraries in several multiple-hour sessions. Observation focused on key aspects such as teens' interactions with the space, staff, and each other; and aspects of programming, physical space, and staff behaviour that serve to welcome and engage teens.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with library staff (Table 1). In the Scandinavian case study, all interviewees were at the same level of an almost entirely flat staff hierarchy. In the U.S. case study, interviewees comprised all levels of Youth Services staff: Head of Youth Services, Teen Services Librarian, and Youth Services Library Assistant. Key topics addressed in interviews included policies that make these libraries appealing for the target

age group, intentional design of physical space, and staff philosophy concerning interactions with their visitors.

Interviewee	Location
Interviewee 1	Lava
Interviewee 2	Lava
Interviewee 3	TioTretton
Interviewee 4	TioTretton
Interviewee 5	Lava
Interviewee 6	TCPL
Interviewee 7	TCPL
Interviewee 8	TCPL

Table 1: Key to the interviewees

Service plans and other library documents comprised a third source of evidence. A limitation of the study is that interviews were not conducted with teenagers themselves, due to ethical concerns surrounding research involving minors. Data about teens' use of the libraries were instead obtained through observation.

When data were coded and analysed, eight overarching themes emerged (Figure 1), which were used to group and interpret the findings.

[INSERT HERE: FIGURE 1.]

Figure 1: The eight themes of the case study findings

4. BACKGROUND

Scandinavia has a reputation for innovation and scholarship concerning the public library's role in a community. Libraries have long been linked in the public mind with civil rights, civic engagement, and equality of opportunities (Svendsen, 2013). Scandinavia offers numerous examples of libraries created to serve primarily, or solely, young adults. Many offer non-traditional elements such as kitchen facilities and 'recruit staff who are not trained librarians, preferring staff with varied backgrounds and skills' (Evjen and Vold, 2018: p. 59). Sweden's political and social climate, for example with explicitly stated

national cultural policy objectives and robust funding for arts and culture (Statens kulturråd, 2019), provides a foundation of funding and support for youth library services.

In the U.S., public libraries have long treated teenagers as a distinct service group, separate from both children's and adult services (Agosto, 2016) and there is a significant body of scholarship on serving this age group. Recent decades have brought increasing recognition that creating inviting, user-centred environments is integral not only to meeting the needs of teens, but to successful community development as a whole (Bolan, 2016). The U.S. offers many examples of libraries working innovatively with their teen populations.

5. THE STOCKHOLM CASE STUDY

Lava is a library and creative space for ages fourteen to twenty-five. Visitors can check out books, engage in a wide range of creative projects using Lava's equipment, or simply enjoy a safe social space. Visitors mount their own cultural events, such as exhibitions in Lava's gallery space (Stockholms Stadsteater, 2019a). Lava began in 1996 as a creative and cultural space for young adults; library services were added in 2013. Lava thus offers a unique perspective, at a time when many libraries are seeking to expand their services by adding facilities such as makerspaces. Lava has undergone a similar transition, but in reverse, by essentially adding a library to a makerspace.

TioTretton ('TenThirteen') is for ages ten to thirteen. Founded in 2011, TioTretton offers a purpose-designed space with cosy reading nooks, open areas for physical movement, and a kitchen. Lava and TioTretton are located in Kulturhuset Stadsteatern, an arts and culture complex in central Stockholm.[2] The libraries of Kulturhuset Stadsteatern are administered separately from the city library system, although they share a catalogue.

Presented here are findings concerning practices, approaches, and values that support successful and impactful teen services in the Stockholm case study libraries, organised according to eight overarching themes.

Theme 1: Ownership and a sense of belonging

One of the most constant refrains at both Lava and TioTretton is the importance of giving young people a space that is just for them. At TioTretton, no adults aside from library staff are allowed to enter (Stockholms Stadsteater, 2019b). At Lava, adults can enter to check out or return books, but they may not hang out in the space or attend workshops. At TioTretton, an 'adult border' stretches across the floor at the library's entrance to underscore that this space is for preteens only and that they will be prioritised within it. As Interviewee 3 explained, 'We feel that a library for everyone is never a library for children. If you say that you don't want to exclude adults or to prioritise, you're not being neutral, you're prioritising the existing norm. Which is usually adults.'

Theme 2: Respect

Every interviewee touched on the importance of listening to young people, treating them with respect, and being non-judgemental: treating teens as people who have opinions and ideas worth hearing.

Library rules are few and simple, based on a shared sense of ownership and respect for the space. Interviewee 3 described a policy of 'always providing an option, instead of a rule' (for example, 'You can't dance here…but you can over there!'). The approach is one of expecting mutual respect, Interviewee 3 explained: 'Putting a lot of trust in the kids, we get a lot back.'

When issues do occur at Lava or TioTretton, staff first approach the visitor to discuss it. If the behaviour continues, they will ask the person to leave. However, the focus is on 'the action, not the person', Interviewee 3 said. For example: '*You* are not a problem, but this type of language is a problem.' Staff make it clear that every day is a clean slate and the visitor is welcome back tomorrow. They find it far more effective to talk to teens than to shush them, and find that visitors are usually receptive to these conversations.[3]

Theme 3: A welcoming atmosphere

Lava (Figure 2) is a colourful, cheerful space with a wealth of easily accessible materials ranging from books to tools. During observation for this research, teens used the sewing machines, worked quietly at laptops, socialised, read, browsed the shelves, studied, played games, made art, or even played musical instruments, as well as working in the silkscreen studio and sound studio. Lava was not loud but felt active, with a pleasant low buzz of people chatting and going about their activities. Music played in the background, underscoring that this is not a traditional library, nor a silent space. As Interviewee 2 explained, 'Free time should feel different from school.'

[INSERT HERE: Figure 2.]

Figure 2: Lava Bibliotek & Verkstad interior

TioTretton (Figure 3), with its couches, hammocks, and reading nooks, emphasises cosiness. Visitors take off their shoes when they enter, a standard practice in Swedish homes. Following this practice in the library signals that this is a place where preteens can feel at home. TioTretton offers a variety of places to explore, from the spacious kitchen to the costume box to the book displays. Visitors were observed browsing the collection, reading alone or in pairs, gaming together, trying on costumes, snacking and chatting with staff in the kitchen, or hanging out in groups on the couch or other furniture.[4] Interviewee 4 noted that visitors who age out of TioTretton tell staff that 'the thing they miss the most is the cosiness'.

[INSERT HERE: Figure 3.]

Figure 3: Variety of seating options at TioTretton

Over a decade ago, Lava had developed a reputation as exclusive. Particular friend groups dominated the space with loud conversation, leaving

others hesitant to enter. Staff reflected on this phenomenon and redesigned Lava to make a more inclusive impression, in part by making the space more actively creative. As Interviewee 5 explained:

> Humans are always in doubt that they really belong to a place. And so it was very important to try to remove all the doubt. That this is a place not just for people who look in a certain way or listen to a certain music. But perhaps are interested in creating stuff. Or doing stuff.

They also moved the staff desk closer to the door, 'so we could say hello to everyone and just ask them what they would like to do today', as Interviewee 5 put it. At TioTretton, too, a staff member is always near the door to greet each child who enters. Visitors are free to return the greeting or not, as they prefer.

The addition of library services at Lava further bolstered this work to be more broadly welcoming, as Interviewee 1 explained:

> A public library is a space that everybody feels that they know how to enter. A studio, or an atelier, or an art space, or a concert – that's a different thing, then you maybe feel like, oh, maybe I have to look a certain way, I have to know certain things. […] But in a library, everybody can come in.

Staff use inclusive language, for example not making assumption about their visitors' gender identities or the type of family they live in. They build book collections that represent many worldviews and reflect the diversity of their visitors' identities (Lava Bibliotek & Verkstad, 2018). TioTretton's collection contains books in 33 languages, which include Sweden's official minority languages and the languages of immigrant communities.

Being welcoming to all sometimes requires active management, for example by asking one group to lower the volume of their conversation if it is impacting others' ability to concentrate or to enjoy the space. Staff pay attention to who is making use of their facilities, for example that the sound studio is not used only by those practising DJ or hip hop skills, but also for instance by opera students or podcasters.

Staff describe Lava as 'a nice place to fail' (Ekström and Duvarci, 2013), where young people can experiment without worrying about achieving a specific result. And at TioTretton, Interviewee 3 explained that, as Swedish children's lives have become increasingly scheduled, the library offers preteens the 'freedom to be curious, try new things, and just have fun with it'. There are also visitors who come to TioTretton specifically because it offers a place to read with fewer distractions than at home.

Theme 4: Balancing inequalities in society

Libraries are 'one of the only places you can go to without resources', Interviewee 1 pointed out, where young people are welcome to spend time without spending money and where they can create rather than only consume. Lava and TioTretton provide technology and creative equipment that would be too expensive for individuals to afford, such as the sound studio or 3D printer. Lava also lends tools and musical instruments, since these are things that many young adults cannot afford to own. Interviewee 3 reflected:

> Public libraries exist, in a way, to balance out economical divides in our society, but also social. So for us, some simple things are that everything is extremely free. […] We want to give something to everyone, not just to a certain few who pay for it.

Interviewees also noted the significance of Kulturhuset Stadsteatern being located on 'neutral ground' in central Stockholm. The libraries offer a place that is free, safe, and does not 'belong' to any single group, since no one lives in the surrounding commercial district. The location is accessible, near a transport hub where many metro and bus lines converge. Indeed, over 70% of the libraries' visitors come from beyond the city centre (Burga and Woodski, 2017), from outlying boroughs that include many neighbourhoods of lower income and immigrant families. Lava conducts a yearly survey of its visitors to gain perspective on whom the library is reaching or failing to reach.

Theme 5: Following teens' interests

Nearly everything at Lava is initiated and implemented by visitors (Ekström and Duvarci, 2013). This includes everything from large-scale events to day-to-day activities. In addition to empowering young people, this approach makes it easier to plan and promote programmes. As Interviewee 1 explained, when staff arrange programming, 'it becomes this huge amount of work to plan it and then to get people to come and to stay. But if people arrange it themselves, then their friends come – it makes more sense.' This approach also increases the range of young adults Lava reaches, as Interviewee 5 described:

> At the moment we have an exhibition from a girl from Afghanistan. And when she has her exhibition opening, her friends will come, and they will notice, oh, there's pen and paper here, I can sit and draw. And when we have this concert with the Japanese math rock band, organised by the Stockholm straight edge community, then their friends come, and they discover this art from Afghanistan. So by allowing people to do their stuff, we reach out through their network.

Facilities, too, evolve based on young adults' interests. Lava's sound studio was created because there was no such space in Stockholm that was affordable for teens. And at TioTretton, staff recognised that preteens often grew restless during long afternoons at the library, so they hired a choreographer to design a new room that allows more options for movement. Because staff spend a significant portion of their time mingling in the space with their visitors, they have constant access to input via conversations and observation (Figure 4).

[INSERT HERE: Figure 4.]

Figure 4: Mechanisms for youth input at TioTretton and Lava

Staff follow visitors' lead on what activities they want to engage in and are careful not to push them to participate in something only because staff suggest it. During one observation session for this research, a staff member

was seated at a table doing a craft activity; visitors could join in if they chose, but the mode was informal, with the adult and preteens simply engaging in the activity alongside each other.

Theme 6: Flexibility

The libraries offer a variety of spaces. At Lava, there are communal tables at the centre and quieter corners in other parts of the room. TioTretton has tables for group projects, and hammocks and nooks for reading. Shelves and furniture are on wheels, allowing them to be rolled out of the way to accommodate concerts or other large events.

Hands-on materials are free of cost and available at all times, rather than being brought out only during formalised programming. Visitors are encouraged to browse and do not need to ask permission before opening drawers to look for supplies. Indeed, they were frequently observed doing so during this research. Gaming, art, and other projects offer opportunities for teens to interact informally and bond over shared activities. Staff at both Lava and TioTretton pointed out that it is easier for people to fall into conversation when they are doing something with their hands.

Flexibility is integral not only to the space and materials, but also to the overall philosophy of these libraries, as Interviewee 3 described:

> What we do today might work, but then next year, who knows, and what kind of ten to thirteen year olds will be visiting our library then? Society changes. You can never think of this as something that: 'Okay, but next year we'll be finished with our concept', because it constantly, and it *should* constantly, change.

Theme 7: The staff's role

Staff see their role as that of a coach or facilitator. Lava offers very low-cost introductory workshops to equipment such as the sound studio, 3D printer, or silkscreen studio, after which visitors are allowed to use these on their own. Interviewee 5 explained that when teaching workshops, 'I try to

keep my input to a more instrumental level', providing a toolset of skills rather than telling people 'what they should do or how they should do it'.

Staff function as a 'third adult': not a family member or teacher, but a neutral adult with no knowledge or judgement about visitors' lives outside the library. They consider informal conversations with their teen and preteen visitors to be one of the most important parts of the job. Interviewee 3 described staff–visitor interactions at TioTretton:

> We sit on the couch or we sit in the kitchen; it's really easy for them to just come and sit beside you, and sometimes they talk about everything, school, their lives, or ask a lot of interesting personal questions! And I think that's important, in having a children's library, to not create unnecessary distance between you and the visitor.

Being alongside visitors in this way is a core tenet of both Lava and TioTretton. Some staff hours are allocated for completing tasks in the library office, whilst others are earmarked for simply being present in the public space: reading, chatting with visitors, or assisting with creative projects. This understanding – that casual interaction with visitors is a crucial part of the staff's role and that staff hours should be allocated accordingly – is at the core of the libraries' operations. This principle of being alongside can be seen even in the libraries' physical layout: for example, reference and circulation computers are positioned such that staff and visitors can access them together from the same side (Figure 5), rather than staff working behind a desk. Lava staff also use the space to work on their own creative projects. TioTretton staff, too, were observed using the space as their visitors do, for example reading on the couch – deliberately modelling the behaviours they encourage in their preteen visitors.

[INSERT HERE: Figure 5.]

Figure 5: Outward-facing reference desk at TioTretton

Theme 8: Staffing and hiring

Both libraries hire employees with a variety of expertise. In fact, no current staff member at TioTretton at the time of this research was a professionally trained librarian. Instead, staff hold degrees in fields such as art, dance, theatre, journalism, or political science. The qualities TioTretton seeks to hire are an enthusiasm for working with youth, an ability to be relaxed and hang out with preteens, and an understanding of the value of a space that is only for preteens. Lava does employ professional librarians, but recruits staff with a range of expertise as well, for example in art, filmmaking, music, or recreational pedagogy. The libraries value hiring staff who can interact with visitors over shared creative interests.

Reflections

Both Lava and TioTretton emphasise giving young people a place of their own, with TioTretton even drawing an 'adult border' past which only children can enter. A core principle is that young people should have the same rights as any adult. The libraries serve as neutral spaces that welcome all young adults and provide access to hands-on materials and a range of technology. An important aspect of the staff's role is simply to be present and follow young people's interests, mingling and participating in activities alongside their teen and preteen visitors. Lava and TioTretton have highly advantageous resources, such as their dedicated spaces, extensive collections, and a budget sufficient to maintain a large staff dedicated solely to the target age group. But they are clear that these are not their only important factors. As Interviewee 3 elaborated:

> What we try to say is that, yes, we have this amazing space, but what we work with the most is our philosophy in interacting with our kids, not sitting behind a desk, always talking, hanging out with the kids, sitting in the room, reading the same books as they do, talking about the same books, loving the same books that they do, trusting them. […] If we had this space but the staff consisted of people not wanting to work with kids, [the space] wouldn't matter. […] But I think in a space without the exact

furniture that we have today, we could still build something amazing.

6. THE ITHACA CASE STUDY

Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL), founded in 1864, serves the small university city of Ithaca, New York, as well as the surrounding rural county. The library is primarily funded by the county legislature, with additional support from a large-scale Friends of the Library book sale and from the Library Foundation, which oversees private funding. Such 'public-private partnerships', which draw on philanthropy as well as public funds, are common for urban library systems in the U.S. (Klinenberg, 2018: p. 33).

Presented here are findings concerning practices, approaches, and values that support successful and impactful teen services in the Ithaca case study library. As with the preceding case study, these findings are organised according to eight themes.

Theme 1: Ownership and a sense of belonging

The TCPL teen centre, which opened in October 2017, serves ages twelve to eighteen. The outermost area contains the stacks; next comes an area of study carrels and computers, then an open-plan seating area. Locating this social space furthest within the teen centre affords teens privacy, as well as creating somewhat of a buffer between this noisier area and the rest of the library. Adults and younger children may enter the teen centre to select books, but are encouraged not to spend extended time. Teens also have access to the library's makerspace and digital lab during both general and teen-only hours.

The teen centre was created in part because the wider community offered so few spaces where teens could hang out without an obligation to purchase anything. Interviewee 6 reflected, 'I think, especially for the teens, we are a community center. […] Their number one thing that they do in the library is be social together. They're forming their community.'

Teen services had previously occupied a small corner of the children's

section. The addition of a dedicated teen space tripled teen programming attendance numbers, Interviewee 6 said. During observation for this research, some teens gathered in the central seating area to converse; others worked quietly at the tables or read in chairs around the outer edges of the space. They made extensive use of the computers, flatscreens, and a Nintendo Switch, as well as perusing the collection of books and graphic novels.

Teenagers can also join the Junior Library Advisory Council, which plans events and engages in library advocacy. Interviewee 6 explained:

> I want them to have ownership in the library. And in ownership, not only do I want them to feel like, my voice is heard here and my decisions help mold what it's like; I also want them to have sort of a responsibility of: This is my library, I have some stewardship in the library and its future.

Theme 2: Respect

Interviewees highlighted the importance of not talking down to teenagers. Interviewee 7 suggested that many adults may not realise that talking to teens is not a special skill that needs to be learned: 'You just talk to them like they're people!'

Teens, like all library patrons, must comply with TCPL's Code of Conduct. As Interviewee 7 explained:

> We hold them to the same standards we hold any patrons to. […] I don't think it's okay to have a lot of separate rules for your teenagers that you don't have for your children and you don't have for your adults.

At the same time, Interviewee 6 said, the approach is one of tolerance: 'We try to meet [each] age group where they are. Just like we tolerate a toddler screaming their head off for a short period in the [children's] department, we would also tolerate a teen laughing loudly.' When behaviour does get out of hand, staff encourage visitors to think through the effects of their actions, as Interviewee 6 described:

> [The librarian] will frequently go up to kids that are misbehaving and be like, 'Now, do you think that's something you should be doing in the library?' […] And her experience is, most teens will be like, '...No. I shouldn't.' And they'll stop! You know, instead of walking up and being like, 'Don't do that, you can't do that in the library.'

Hard limits come in cases of bullying or physical violence; then, the visitor will be asked to leave for the day. However, staff also use positive methods of redirecting, rather than waiting to step in after things have escalated. If a group's energy is growing rowdy, staff will propose a creative activity or offer challenges that require the teens to explore the book collection. Interviewee 6 suggested that discussions about teens too often focus on the negatives: 'I'd like to redirect the attitude of: Hey, what's really good and fun and what are the opportunities with teens that we're missing?'

Theme 3: A welcoming atmosphere

TCPL staff strive to actively signal that the library is a welcoming place for everyone, for example by using inclusive language and teens' preferred pronouns. They maintain a collection of young adult books reflecting diversity in aspects such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability.

Staff also see value in offering place that imposes less structure than the rest of teens' often overscheduled lives. As Interviewee 7 explained, 'I think that actually that's probably one of the most important services that the teen center offers at this point, is a place where they can *not* do things. Where they can just be.'

One downside is that noise does carry into the general sections of the library, where it sometimes bothers adult visitors. Interviewee 7 reflected:

> It is really difficult to maintain balance. I don't have a great answer, unfortunately. One thing that I can't and I will not control for is, if there's a lot of people here, there's a lot of people here. I'm not going to drive people away.

Theme 4: Balancing inequalities in society

The library provides access to technology that individual teenagers might not be able to afford on their own, such as costly gaming systems or makerspace equipment. TCPL as a whole extended its commitment to equitable access by removing fines on overdue books, 'because fines are increasingly being seen as a real barrier of access', Interviewee 6 explained.

Staff conduct outreach with schools and other community organisations. And they strive to remain aware of communities that may feel less welcome at the library, so they can reach out to those groups. For instance, Interviewee 6 noted that the library is not adequately serving the local African American community. Although staff have taken some steps towards addressing this issue, for example by partnering with local community centres that serve African American youth, it remains an on-going issue. As Interviewee 6 said:

> I have heard throughout the community that some people in the African American community don't feel as comfortable at the library. So I think that's on the library, that we need to make sure we send the message of: You are welcome here. That's something we're always striving for. But I don't think we're there yet.

Theme 5: Following teens' interests

In creating the teen centre, staff solicited teens' input on aspects such as furniture and interior design. And to generate ideas for programmes, staff reach out to teens to learn about their interests (Figure 6). For example, weekly teen-only sessions were introduced in the library's makerspace and digital lab after teens expressed an interest in trying out the technology.

In fact, makerspace sessions provide an example of how teens' interests are prioritised. Visitors can use any of the equipment, or bring in their own projects to work on. At a 'Maker Monday' observed for this research, the makerspace was full of teens of various ages working on projects that ranged from assembling chainmail to designing items for 3D printing. Staff and volunteers circulated to assist as needed and were highly enthusiastic about visitors' projects. The teens, too, took an interest in one another's work,

sharing skills and helping each other with tasks.

[INSERT HERE: Figure 6.]

Figure 6: Mechanisms for youth input at TCPL

Theme 6: Flexibility

TCPL teen services staff employ an approach they call 'guerrilla programming', also described by Interviewee 8 as 'planned haphazardness'. This refers to a stock of casual programming ideas that staff can implement at a moment's notice. As Interviewee 6 explained, flexibility is key: 'If your plan that you had in your head isn't going well, how can you adjust a little, by a few degrees, keep your intention but make it a little better fit for the teens.'

The teen centre offers various art supplies and technologies that teens can access at any time. There is a range of seating options (Figure 7), with most of the furniture on wheels or otherwise easily movable. This means the space can be rearranged for different types of programming, as well as allowing visitors to move the furniture into whatever arrangement they prefer. Teens were observed pulling chairs into different parts of the space to accommodate the size of their groups.

[INSERT HERE: Figure 7.]

Figure 7: Variety of seating options in the TCPL teen centre

Working flexibly is important on the larger scale of library operations as well. As Interviewee 6 said:

> The public library, we're experts at looking around, seeing our community and saying specifically, what does my community need? […] So it doesn't matter if you're in a cornfield in Iowa or downtown New York City, your library can look around and talk to people and see what's happening and say: What are the needs that I need to be meeting?

Theme 7: The staff's role

Staff recognise that their role encompasses not only traditional services such as reference and readers' advisory, but also 'a lot of conversations with teenagers about their lives', as Interviewee 7 said. The quality of staff's rapport with visitors was observable in how enthusiastically teens greeted staff and how readily they struck up conversations.

Interviewees mentioned that it can be a challenge to train other library staff to interact with teens as they do, especially since so much of the job consists simply of being comfortable interacting with teenagers. Interviewee 7 explained, 'It's a really liminal time in someone's life and so it's a liminal space, and I think you just have to be comfortable with that.'

Staff also stay informed about other resources and services available in the community. As Interviewee 6 put it, 'As librarians we aren't the experts of everything, but we are experts at connecting the experts with the people who want to learn.'

Theme 8: Staffing and hiring

Youth Services staff meet frequently to share ideas and brainstorm; Interviewee 8 noted that being on the same page in this way can help to achieve a lot even when resources are scarce. TCPL as a whole also relies on volunteers to run many programmes. Interviewee 7 emphasised the importance of employing staff specifically for teen services:

> Every library needs to have a dedicated staff member, no matter how small. I know that's hard to say! But if you have a dedicated children's librarian, and you have a dedicated adult librarian, you need to *make* the resources to have a dedicated teen librarian. […] And if you don't have the funding to do that, then you need somebody who wants to, or is willing to, learn how to work with teenagers. […] You can't just tell a children's librarian that they have to throw something together, without giving them the continuing ed or professional development they need.

Reflections

TCPL's teen centre has quickly become a draw for local teens who value having a free, safe place in which to socialise and pursue their interests. A foundation of the library's approach to teen services is to treat teenagers with respect and as the equals of any other library visitors. Staff are responsive to teens' interests and develop strong rapport with their visitors, recognising that the job requires conversations and engagement with teens.

7. DISCUSSION

What was most interesting to discover, in analysing and synthesising the results of the two case studies, was the significant degree to which the philosophies underpinning these libraries' work aligned, despite differences in their societal context and available resources.

Theme 1: Ownership and a sense of belonging

Cockett (1998, cited in Bernier, Males and Rickman, 2014) points out that issues surrounding teens and libraries often stem from the simple fact that these spaces are not created with teenagers in mind. The libraries studied here, conversely, take young people as the very starting point in creating their spaces and services, working from a fundamental perspective that teens, and preteens, deserve a place of their own. This aligns with one of the important elements of a teen space identified by Agosto et al. (2015): a sense of ownership by teens. 'Ownership' in both case studies encompasses responsibilities as well as rights. For instance, rules for behaviour rely upon visitors feeling an investment in upholding the standards of a shared space.

Forming a community is important to adolescents (Chelton, 2002) and both case studies highlighted the value of providing a place where teenagers can be social together. Adults are either not allowed to enter these spaces at all (TioTretton) or may enter to borrow materials but are encouraged not to linger, so that the space can truly belong to young people (Lava and TCPL).

Multiple interviewees stressed that 'a place of their own' needn't require extensive space; it could be as little as a single couch that is reserved solely for teens' use. As Interviewee 3 put it, 'It doesn't have to be a whole section. But just to seriously give the kids something that's theirs.'

Theme 2: Respect

Both case studies emphasised treating teenagers as people with opinions and ideas worth hearing; and that young people have the right to be taken seriously and treated as the equal of any other library user. In a sense, this was the single most important takeaway from this research: the necessity of mutual respect as a foundation on which all other work can build. In the memorable words of Interviewee 7: 'You just talk to them like they're people!'

It was striking that the libraries in both case studies, despite their different contexts and origins, converged on a similar approach of discussing problems *with* teens rather than lecturing *at* them, encouraging teens to think through their choices instead of invoking rules. TioTretton and Lava stress that each day is a clean slate; a visitor who is asked to leave today is always welcome back tomorrow.

Theme 3: A welcoming atmosphere

Physical comfort is of 'strong importance' to teens, as is having 'multipurpose spaces designed to accommodate both group and individual use' (Agosto et al., 2015: p. 39). The libraries studied here offer comfortable furnishings and a mix of quieter and more social spaces. TioTretton particularly emphasises cosiness; Lava and TCPL tend towards socialising and creativity. Quiet is not required and non-traditional activities such as gaming are equally acceptable uses of the space alongside studying or reading.

These libraries work to counter racial bias, support gender and sexuality diversity, and be accessible to people with all types of disabilities. Interviewees in both case studies talked about assessing what kind of first impression their

space makes, and then working to fix unintentional messages it may transmit about who its intended users are. Whether or not young people see themselves reflected in the books they read also makes a powerful statement about whether they are valued in the society in which they live (Bishop, 1990: p. ix). Developing diverse collections that reflect the multiplicity of identities found amongst the visitors helps to make these libraries welcoming to young adults.

Notably, both case studies brought up the topic of teens' overscheduled lives, highlighting the importance of allowing young people unstructured time to 'just be' (TCPL), to 'do nothing' (TioTretton), or even to 'fail' as part of their explorations (Lava).

Theme 4: Balancing inequalities in society

Public libraries play an important role in equalising opportunities 'across social and economic differences' (Aabø, Audunson and Vårheim, 2010: p. 25). The libraries in both case studies provide resources and equipment that many young people would not be able to afford on their own. These libraries serve as a non-commercial 'third space' (Oldenburg, 1989), where visitors do not need to purchase anything in order to spend time. Lava also emphasises providing a 'neutral ground' to which no single group can lay claim. Staff in both case studies continue to reflect on how to better reach groups who are not being served adequately or who may not feel welcome at the library.

Theme 5: Following teens' interests

These libraries centre teens' own desires as the driving factor in their services, from programming choices to the design of physical spaces. Staff obtain input as part of their day-to-day operations, gleaned from conversations and observations of how the visitors use the space. As Bolan (2016: p. 14) suggests, 'Identify what teens *need*, not what adults *want*.'

A teen-centred approach needn't require great expense or extensive facilities. As Interviewee 6 suggested, 'I think, no matter your space

constraints, you can always work with the teens and talk to the teens and find out what they're interested in.'

Theme 6: Flexibility

Flexibility and adaptability are built into these libraries' operations. TCPL employs 'guerrilla programming', a reserve of programming ideas that can be implemented at a moment's notice and adjusted in response to visitors' interests. In both case studies, keeping hands-on materials visible and available allows visitors to engage with the space in a variety of ways and at any time, not only during formal programmes.

A teen space 'should be flexible and allow for teens to move furniture so that they can be comfortable and successful in collaborative and independent activities' (Bolan, 2016). These libraries offer furnishings that are varied and easily rearranged.

Further, the libraries engage in an ongoing process of looking at the needs of their community and visitors and adapting their services accordingly.

Theme 7: The staff's role

In all of the libraries studied, interviewees expressed that conversations with their teen and preteen visitors are one of the most important parts of the job. And in the Stockholm case study, a key aspect of operations is that staff are present in the space, mingling alongside their visitors and serving as role models by using the libraries' resources for their own creative projects. This aligns with the recommendation of Drotner, Jørgensen and Nyboe (2006) that staff's interactions with visitors should take place throughout the library, not only behind desks.

In the Stockholm case study, staff view themselves as coaches or facilitators, providing teens with opportunities and skillsets, but refraining from telling visitors 'what they should do or how they should do it'. Interviewees in the Ithaca case study further described the library as a resource centre, with

an important role of connecting young people with resources and services throughout the community.

Theme 8: Staffing and hiring

Chelton (2002: p. 30) advocates hiring 'staff who like and relate to youth'. In both case studies, it was evident that staff had taken the time to develop a rapport with library visitors. Interviewees in both case studies stressed the importance of dedicating staff specifically to this age group, which can otherwise too easily be left out of library services entirely.

As the definition of what types of learning take place in libraries has expanded (Jochumsen and Hvenegaard, 2010), many libraries have also expanded their hiring practices to recruit staff who are not professional librarians, but rather bring other skills and training to the library's offerings (Evjen and Vold, 2018). At both Lava and TioTretton, staff have expertise in a variety of creative disciplines. To a smaller degree, this is also true for TCPL's teen services staff, which includes traditionally trained librarians, as well as a staff member with a background in recreational leadership.

Reflections

The libraries in both case studies focus on giving young adults a place where they can feel ownership and belonging; where they are welcomed and respected; and where teens' own desires are centred. For Lava and TioTretton, mingling with visitors and being present in the space are key aspects of their work. Staff in both case studies embrace the broad nature of their role, which encompasses interpersonal as well as informational responsibilities.

The libraries studied here are particularly well-resourced examples. Especially in the Stockholm case study, a conducive political and social climate enables these libraries to maintain impressive facilities and a large staff. These are undeniably highly favourable conditions, which many institutions would not be able to replicate at the same scale. However, much of these libraries'

approach to their work – and, crucially, the mindset that underlies that approach – can indeed be emulated.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What follows are conclusions on factors that contribute to these libraries' success in engaging their teenage populations, along with recommendations that offer practical approaches to applying these findings in other libraries' teen services. The recommendations are based on practices modelled by the case study libraries, but can be adapted to fit a library's own particular needs and constraints.

Theme 1: Ownership and a sense of belonging

By giving young people a place of their own, the case study libraries foster a sense of ownership and belonging. They also provide a social space where teens can build community, something that is particularly important for the social development of this age group.

Recommendations: **dedicate space** for teen services. Providing young adults a sense of ownership and belonging needn't require extensive resources: a space dedicated to teens could be as little as part of a room or even a single couch.

Alternatively, libraries with limited space can achieve the same goal if they **dedicate time** to teen services. A library might operate as an adult library during certain hours, but during after-school hours function as a youth library, in which children and teens are prioritised.[5] Alternatively, a library could use a programming room and designate a few hours each week during which that space belongs to teens.

Theme 2: Respect

The libraries studied here emphasise taking young adults' ideas seriously and valuing their opinions on their own experiences. Teenagers are accorded the same rights and responsibilities as other library users, but with tolerance also built in for the needs and behaviours specific to this age group.

Recommendations: **Treat teenagers with the same respect as any other library visitors.** When issues do arise, discuss them with teens directly and offer options, rather than merely saying 'no'. Encourage teens to **consider the ramifications of their actions**, allowing them agency. Base rules on respectful sharing of common spaces, rather than being imposed from above by adults. **Keep the focus on the behaviour, not the person**, and make each day a clean slate.

Theme 3: A welcoming atmosphere

These libraries create comfortable spaces with appropriate furniture. They adapt to teens, rather than expecting teens to adapt to a space that is not set up to accommodate them. Inclusive policies and diverse collections help to make the libraries welcoming.

Recommendations: Offer **a variety of comfortable seating options**, selected with teens' input. Make it easy for teens to rearrange furniture as needed. **Embrace the community centre role**: Allow socialising and experiment with offering non-traditional activities. It is of course important to balance the needs of various visitors, for example in terms of noise level; this will look different for every library and may require trial and error.

Additionally, all libraries should **be mindful of whom they implicitly make welcome or unwelcome**. Walk through the library to assess the impression it makes and to look for implicit bias (DeMauro, 2018).

Theme 4: Balancing inequalities in society

The case study libraries go beyond providing free resources that help to equalise opportunities. They additionally look for needs in the community that the library can expand its services to meet.

Recommendations: Strive to be, in the words of TioTretton, 'extremely free': **Reduce barriers to access**, for example by removing fines on overdue materials or by improving transport options. Provide access to equipment and resources that teens may not be able to afford on their own. **Look for needs in the community that the library can meet**, as well as **shortfalls in the library's own services** that can be improved. Work to create an atmosphere in which differences in socioeconomic status are left at the door and everyone is treated equally.

Staff can **bring programmes to places where teens already gather**, such as community centres or schools. This can be useful especially for libraries with limited space in their own facilities. **Reach out to organisations that work with marginalised populations** who may not feel welcome at the library. The library can also serve as a resource centre by **connecting young adults with community resources** beyond what the library is able to offer.

Theme 5: Following teens' interests

Programming at these libraries centres on teens' own desires. Staff view themselves as facilitators, rather than drivers, of activities, offering teens the freedom to explore a wide range of interests.

Recommendations: Staff should **follow teens' own interests and input**. Move beyond occasional focus groups or surveys, to a mode where **conversations with teenagers** about their preferences are a routine part of operations. When creating a new teen space, make teens' input integral to the design process. In day-to-day library operations, offer options and let young adults take the lead on what activities they want to engage in.

Theme 6: Flexibility

Flexibility in the design of physical space, in the materials available, in the approach to programming, and even in hiring practices, allows these libraries to adapt nimbly to the changing needs of the teenagers they serve.

Recommendations: Make it easy to explore by having **inexpensive, hands-on materials readily available**, such as art supplies or simple technologies. Try **'guerrilla programming'**: planned activities that can be implemented at any time, rather than only during formal programmes.

Be **flexible with space**, for example by having furniture on wheels, so it can be moved to accommodate various uses. Take a flexible approach to staffing as well: Consider hiring staff with **skill sets beyond those of professionally trained librarians**. Especially for libraries adding maker and creative aspects to their services, think flexibly about the varied expertise staff could offer.

Continually re-evaluate and improve practices. Refine services in response to the changing needs of society in general and of the library's visitors in particular.

Theme 7: The staff's role

Staff in the case study libraries recognise that their role encompasses traditional library services, but also informal conversations with teens about their lives and interests. In the Stockholm case study particularly, staff mingle and use the space alongside visitors, serving as role models and coaches for teens' creative undertakings.

Recommendations: **Mingle and have conversations.** An important part of the staff's role in teen services is simply to be present, whether that means dedicating some staff hours solely to mingling in the space with visitors or having staff carry out their other tasks in a place where they are simultaneously accessible to visitors. Consider positioning circulation and/or reference desks such that **teens can engage with these resources alongside staff**, rather than placing staff at a remove behind a desk.

Theme 8: Staffing and hiring

These libraries ensure they serve teens adequately and equally to other age demographics by dedicating staff specifically to this age group.

Recommendations: **Show teenagers' importance by employing teen services staff.** Where possible, dedicate full-time staff to teen services. If resources are limited, this can instead be a part-time role taken on by another staff member, but it is important to provide the necessary training for this role. Most importantly, staff who work with young adults should be people who **genuinely enjoy their interactions with teens**. It can also be beneficial to hire staff who share commonalities with the youth they serve, whether that be a common cultural background or shared creative interests.

Contribution of this research

This study has observed and analysed cross-cultural examples of public libraries with strong teen services, in order to identify key elements of practice and approach that enable these libraries' successful and impactful interactions with teenagers. A particular focus was placed on factors that are a matter of mindset rather than of specific facilities, in order to offer these as transferable lessons that can be adopted and adapted by libraries in the U.K. and elsewhere.

Key factors identified as contributing to successful, teen-centred services include: providing a space, no matter how small, that is solely for teens, where they can experience a sense of ownership and belonging; according teens the same respect as any other library visitor; creating a space that is comfortable and actively signals that everyone is welcome; letting teens take the lead, with staff following their interests and serving as facilitators for their projects; providing flexibility in spaces and programming; employing staff who have varied expertise and genuinely enjoy working with young adults; mingling and interacting with visitors; and continually re-evaluating and improving practices.

Future researchers could expand upon this work by conducting similar case studies in further locations, especially beyond Europe and North America, or by focusing on services for preteens (also called tweens), a demographic that can likewise benefit from having resources dedicated specifically to them. Of particular interest would be the practices of smaller libraries that manage to dedicate space and services to teens and preteens despite limited resources. Some of the most intriguing leads for potential further areas of research that resulted from this study were interviewees' mentions of other libraries from which they draw inspiration, especially those that provide strong teen services despite operating on a small scale.[6]

The research presented here contributes to an important body of scholarship examining how libraries can best serve their communities' young adults. Teenagers are often considered to be difficult to engage in public library services, but in fact they can benefit enormously from library services and spaces designed specifically for them. Serving teens and preteens can and should be a priority for public libraries, with resources allocated as seriously to young adults as to children's and adult services. By employing the elements of practice and mindset identified here, libraries operating at any scale can improve their teen services, enrich their engagement with teenagers, and have a more positive impact on the communities they serve.

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ENDNOTES

1. The phrase 'teen services' is used throughout this article to refer to library services for the twelve to eighteen demographic. The terms 'young adult' and 'teenager' are often used interchangeably; the former is commonly used in the

literature, but the latter is how members of the age group more often refer to themselves (Agosto, 2013).

2. Kulturhuset Stadsteatern also includes **Rum för Barn**, a children's library that serves ages zero to nine. Similar in feeling to TioTretton, Rum för Barn ('Room for Children') is a large, varied space with cosy reading nooks, play equipment, and a diverse collection in many languages. Visitors take off their shoes at the entrance, and adults are encouraged to enjoy the space along with their children. Interviewees 3 and 4 explained that Rum för Barn was initially intended for ages zero to thirteen, but staff found that preteens were not making use of the library, which tended to be dominated by small children and their parents. This led to the creation of TioTretton as a dedicated space specifically for the preteen age group.

3. On a similar principle, there are no filters on the libraries' computers. Instead of banning certain content, staff prefer to talk to teens and preteens about why something is inappropriate and help them build skills to navigate the Internet safely and with critical thinking.

4. Numerous youth libraries throughout Scandinavia follow similar practices. For example, **Biblo Tøyen** in Oslo, Norway, is a library for the ten to fifteen age group and, as with TioTretton, no adults are allowed to enter. Also similarly to TioTretton and Lava, Biblo Tøyen was designed based on young people's input; has innovative interior design and non-traditional elements such as a kitchen; offers a wide variety of activities, workshops, and equipment; and employs staff drawn from a variety of creative and cultural fields. Biblo Tøyen is intended to function as a 'third place' – neither home nor school – for this age group (Deichman bibliotek, 2020; Evjen and Vold, 2018; Serrano, 2016). Another example is **Stadsbiblioteket** (the City Library) in Malmö, Sweden, which includes sections **Kanini** (ages zero to eight), **Balagan** (ages nine to thirteen), and **Krut** (ages fourteen to thirty). Balagan was designed incorporating input from children in the target age group and, as at TioTretton, visitors take off their shoes when they enter (Malmö stad, 2020a). Krut, like Lava, includes a makerspace, media equipment, and sound recording equipment, as well as a gallery space where young people can mount exhibitions of their artwork (Malmö stad, 2020b).

5. Bredängs bibliotek (PUNKT127) has been successful with this model. The library is open to everyone, but during the afternoon hours its focus is on children and youth (Stockholms stad, 2019). Bredängs bibliotek is a small branch library in an outlying part of Stockholm and was visited during the course of this research, in addition to the case study libraries. Bredäng is an immigrant neighbourhood with fewer municipal resources (for example, there is no youth centre) and the library had come to be known as a problem space. The library restructured and restaffed, shifting its emphasis to youth services. Now, different age groups (children, teens, and adults) are prioritised during different hours. The library also makes excellent and varied use of its fairly small, single-room space.

5. As an example, Interviewee 6 particularly highlighted **Groton Public Library**, a small town library and member of the same regional library network as TCPL, noting that this library 'does amazing things with tweens and teens' despite being a very small facility. Programming includes, for example, teaching food and cooking skills to teens and preteens, since the town is something of a food desert. Speaking of Groton Public Library's director, Interviewee 6 said, 'I think she is proof that you don't need a fancy teen center to serve your community.'

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[NOTE: The figures for the article are given on the following pages.]

Figure 1.

Theme 1
OWNERSHIP AND A SENSE OF BELONGING
Theme 2
RESPECT
Theme 3
A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE
Theme 4
BALANCING INEQUALITIES IN SOCIETY
Theme 5
FOLLOWING TEENS' INTERESTS
Theme 6
FLEXIBILITY
Theme 7
THE STAFF'S ROLE
Theme 8
STAFFING AND HIRING

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

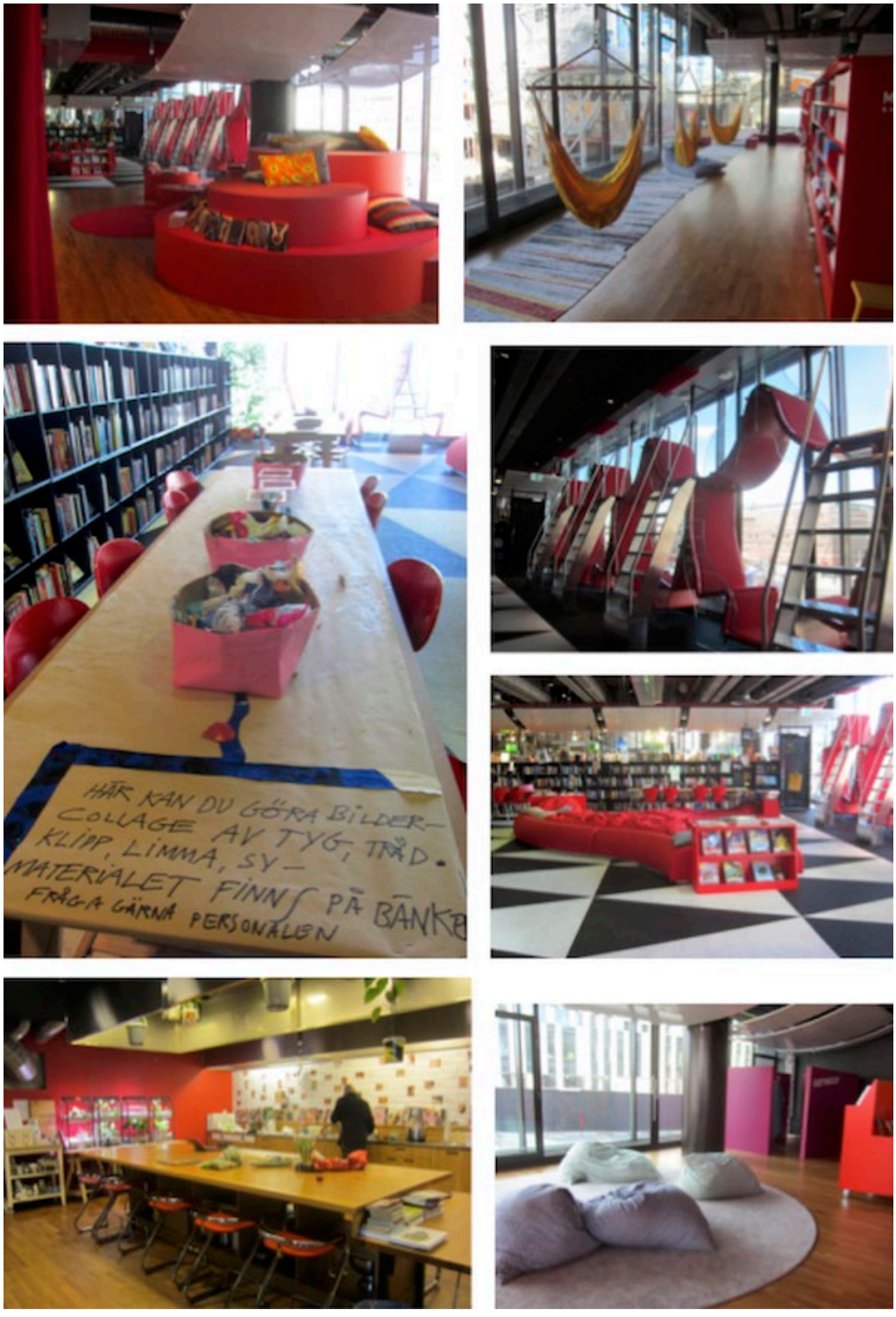

HÄR KAN DU GÖRA BILDER-
COLLAGE AV TYG, TRÅD.
KLIPP, LIMMA, SY-
MATERIALET FINNS PÅ BÄNKE
FRÅGA GÄRNA PERSONALEN

Figure 4.

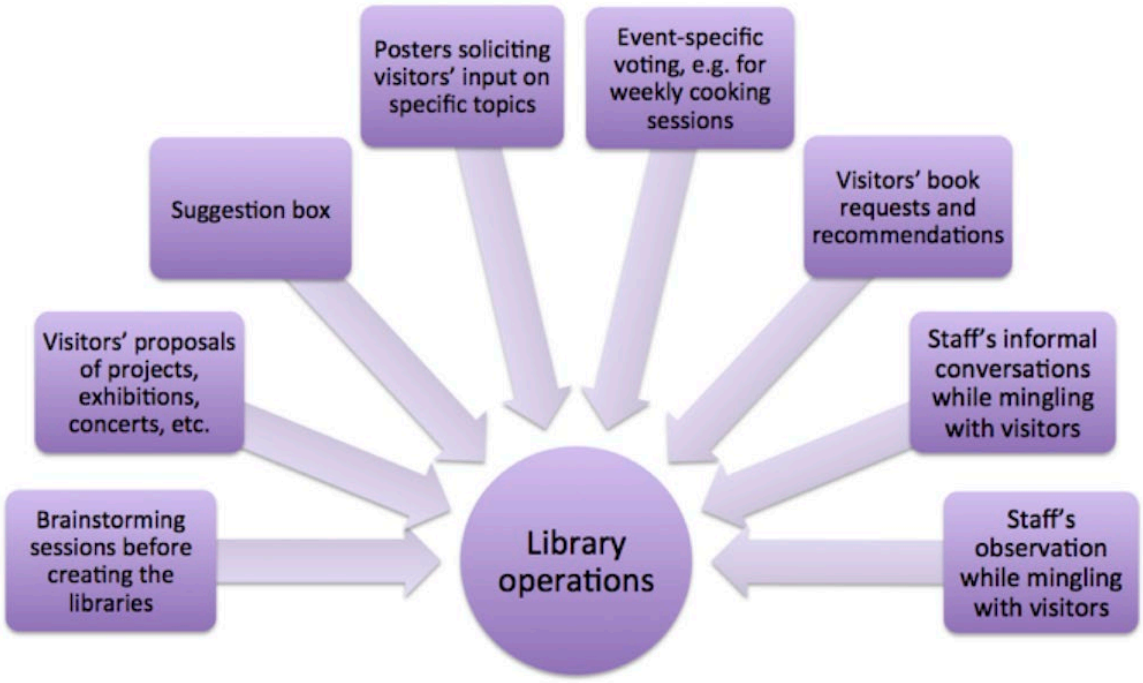
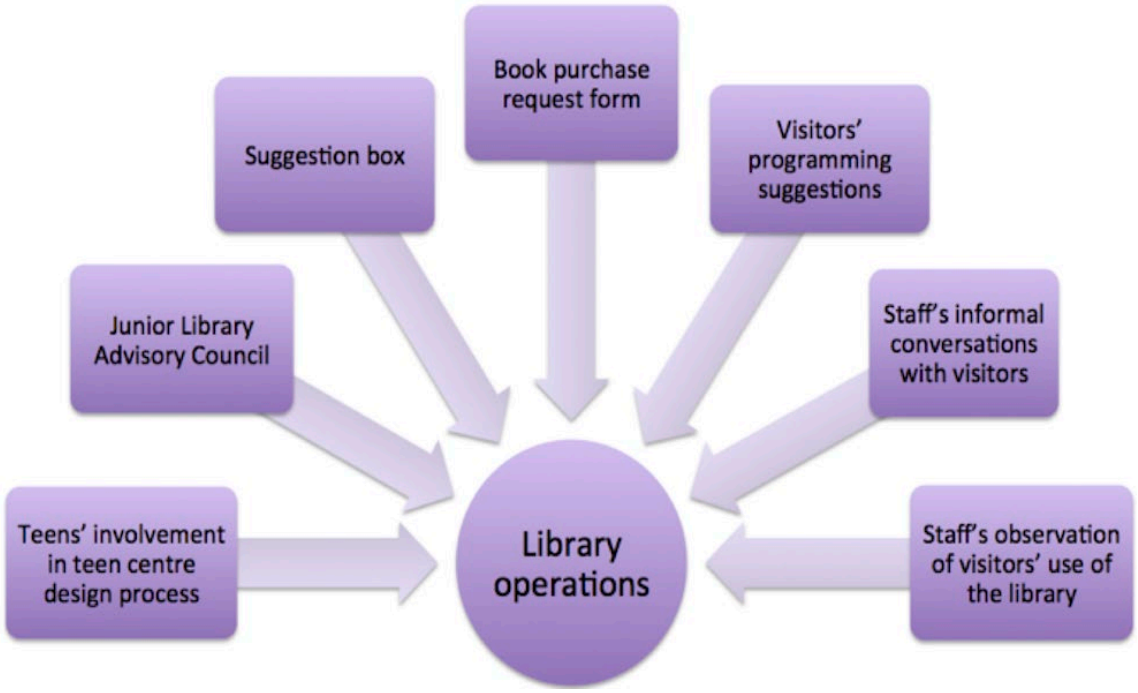

Posters soliciting visitors' input on specific topics
Event-specific voting, e.g. for weekly cooking sessions
Suggestion box
Visitors' book requests and recommendations
Visitors' proposals of projects, exhibitions, concerts, etc.
Staff's informal conversations while mingling with visitors
Brainstorming sessions before creating the libraries
Library operations
Staff's observation while mingling with visitors

Figure 5.

Figure 6.


Book purchase request form
Suggestion box
Visitors' programming suggestions
Junior Library Advisory Council
Staff's informal conversations with visitors
Teens' involvement in teen centre design process
Library operations
Staff's observation of visitors' use of the library

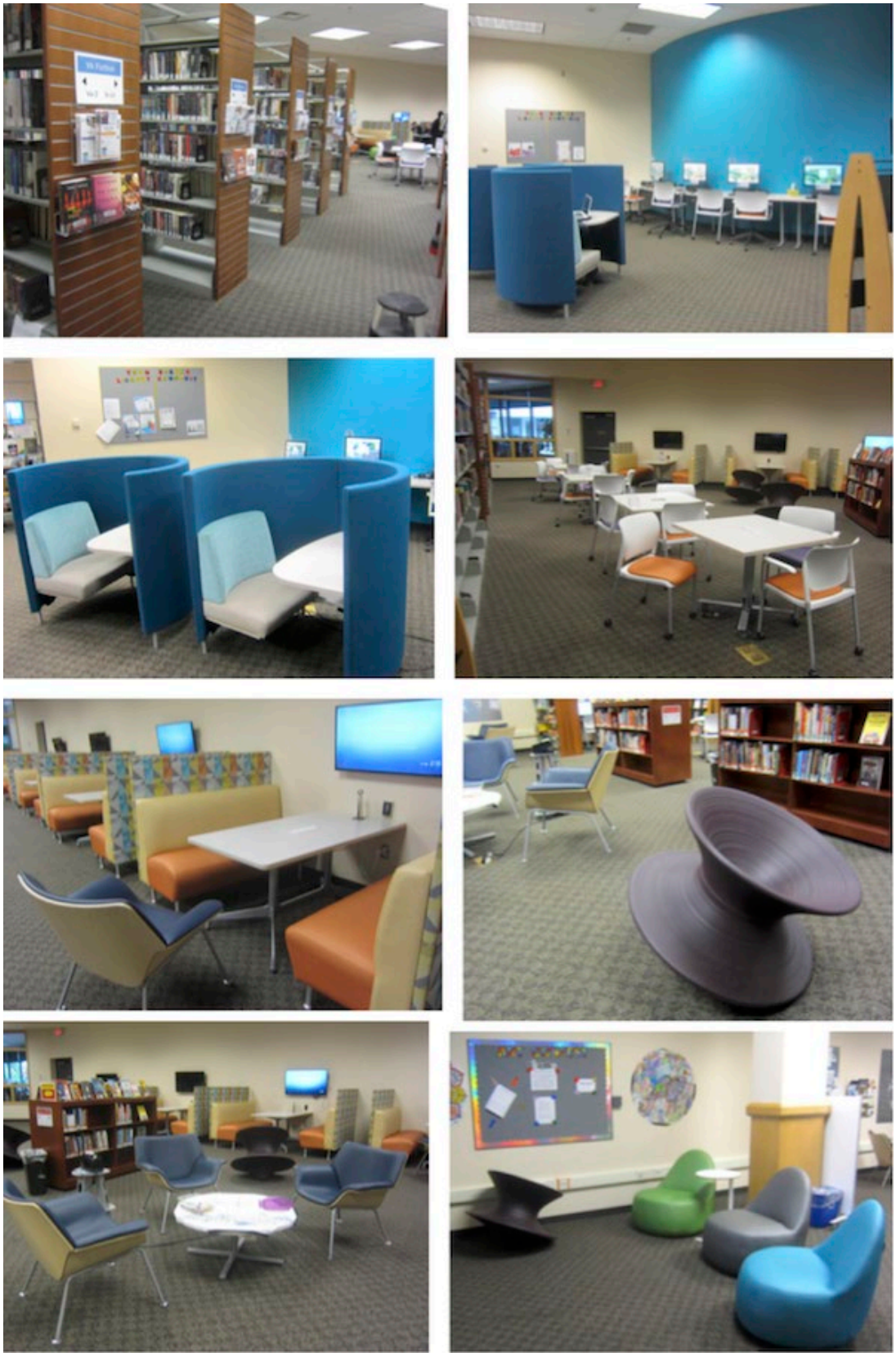



Figure 7.