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## Adulting 101: Know Your Audience

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# Adulting 101: Know Your Audience

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TERESA LUCAS

Teresa grew up in the Willamette Valley, then moved to Southeast Alaska and raised a family. She began her library career in a small high school library on Prince of Wales Island. Realizing there had to be more to libraries than shelving books, Teresa began the journey to earn her Master's in Library and Information Services degree. After fourteen years and several life-changing events, this non-traditional student graduated from the University of North Texas and landed her first professional library job as the branch manager in Dubois, Wyoming. With family still living in Sweet Home, Teresa was happy to return to Oregon, where she accepted the Assistant Director position at the North Bend Public Library. Teresa lives with her husband, son, daughter-in-law, three grandchildren, a dog, and a cat. They enjoy family, friends, road trips, the beach and gardening.

Beautiful Coos Bay County on the southern Oregon coast covers 1,600 square miles and is home to 63,000 people. North Bend is the second largest city on the south coast, with bragging rights to some of the best sand dunes on the continent. Tourism, agriculture, fishing and service industries are quickly replacing the once dominant forest products industry.

Located on the coast highway, the North Bend Public Library is a popular place for locals and tourists alike. The library has been an integral part of the community since its humble beginnings in 1914. The past century has witnessed the small collection of about 100 books and magazines, located in the home of a local community member, grow into the modern collection of almost 200,000 physical and electronic items accessible from the 20,000-square foot stately facility proudly waving the banner of North Bend Public Library (NBPL) today.

During the winter of 2017, I began to see a common topic on library programming group threads centering around ideas such as teaching basic life skills to young and new adults that may not have been taught at home or school. Around the same time, Clara Piazzola, the library's young adult assistant, came to me to share an idea that was buzzing around her library school discussion boards. She told me about a program idea that would teach young people necessary skills to help them survive in the grownup world. Talk about a coincidence! I gave her the go ahead, and she began planning.

Clara came up with the name, *Adulting 101*, and a six-month program outline. Planning each session, we chose to invite local speakers for a few of the topics that warranted professional facilitators. Flyers were displayed in the library and mailed to local bulletin boards and radio stations. *Adulting 101* was posted to the library website, social media, and electronic calendars. We reserved the room, bought snacks, and were ready to launch.



*Librarians should be doing things to induce gasps of amazement!*

—ELI NEIBURGER

The event post on our library's Facebook page started a ripple effect that took us by surprise. We had Facebook likes and shares from tens of thousands of viewers. People were emailing and phoning our City Administrator, Library Director, and the library for more information. The local television station saw the post, called for an interview, and covered the first program. There were radio interviews. We had electronic inquiries and phone calls from across the country and then some. The American Library Association's *Programming Librarian* asked for an article (Lucas, 2017). *Adulting 101* was even mentioned on the morning talk show *LiveKellyandRyan* (*Adulting 101 for Millennials [sic]*, 2017)!

The first program covered cooking tips; Clara shared creative dorm-room cooking hacks, such as how to cook quesadillas with an iron, a bath towel and aluminum foil! Yes! Ramen can be cooked in a coffee pot. We shared a presentation with cost comparison photos from the local grocery and dollar stores, demonstrating valuable ways to shop on a budget while getting the most out of grocery dollars.

A local banker agreed to go over basic financial know-how, including how to balance a checkbook and build credit.

We covered the basics of seeking, applying and interviewing for jobs.

The political climate warranted a class on how to discern fake news and consider the news sources.

Moving was an appropriate topic to start the summer; Clara went over working with property owners and how to live with roommates.

Finally, some odds and ends—changing the oil, using a breaker box, sewing on a button and more.

The North Bend Public Library service district reaches approximately 17,000 people. In addition to two public school systems within ten miles, we also have a community college. You would think we had hit the programming jackpot, right? Not even close. The cooking program brought twenty-four attendees, finances fifteen, zero came for jobs or odds and ends, six for fake news and one for moving out. With so much global interest, it was disheartening to have practically zero local interest.


On paper, *Adulting 101* was a sure thing, but when you get down to it, you can never tell what will or will not draw people to library programs. We spoke to parents and educators who were very supportive of *Adulting 101*, but the targeted audience did not see the benefit in the multifaceted skill set we were offering. The programs were offered on Saturday afternoons, which may have conflicted with the free day students claim for themselves; they may not want to “learn” anything over the weekend.

In retrospect, we could have spent more energy talking to high school administrators, who could have encouraged students to attend, or even offer them the bribe of extra credit. *Adulting 101* might draw a better audience in alternative high school or college prep environments.

Programming that does work in our library includes hands-on, drop-in programs. The most successful program recently was our rock-painting group, which met Saturday afternoons during the summer. NBPL Rocks met in our small conference room; we had a few regulars, but most painters were new people each week. Other successful programs included *Inside the Lines*, our adult coloring club, and cupcake decorating, the end of the summer reading program event.



Author, poetry, and music events may or may not draw a crowd. It depends on the weather, day of the week, and the artist or author. Events co-sponsored with the City also bring a crowd; these events have included glitter tattoos and a free lunch with the local July Jubilee Festival's princesses. Title Wave, our annual countywide reads author visit, is a big success with full-house attendance at four of the eight county libraries.

It is most important to know what works and what does not work for your community. Don't be afraid to take your programs outside or your library to meet your intended audience; they might not come to you, but you can go to them. Continue to plan new programs and try new things. Never stop reminding people that libraries are the place to be! 

### References

Adulting 101 for Millenials [sic]. (2017, March 29). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj6IbfEqZY>

Lucas, T. (2017, March 22). Adulting 101. Retrieved from <http://www.programminglibrarian.org/programs/adulting-101>

# Adulting 101

## Basic How-Tos for Ages 16-25



### **February 25: Bare Essential Cooking**

How to cook easy recipes, and how to creatively cook in dorm rooms (ironed grilled cheese, anyone?)

### **March 18: Financial Know-how**

How to balance a checkbook, set a budget, file your own taxes, and build credit



### **April 22: Getting a Job**

How to write a resume and cover letter, and how to interview

### **May 20: News and the like**

How to find and understand real news on the Internet



### **June 17: Moving out?**

How to live with roommates, find an apartment, and talk to your landlord

### **July 22: Odds and ends**

How to check and refill your oil, use a breaker box, reset an outlet, clean an oven, and anything else you want to know how to do!

