

Book Review

Snow, J. (2020). *Outreach services for teens: A starter guide*. Chicago, IL: ALA Editions. 104pp., \$49.99, ISBN 978-0-8389-4815-6 (Paper)

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Readers might see the title of this book and assume that it was a marketing text to help librarians make teens aware of and participate in age-specific activities organized by their local libraries. They'd be so very wrong. This book by Jess Snow, teen services leader at the Boston Public Library, is designed to help youth librarians who wish to reach underserved teens of all stripes, in all sorts of living situations, but are unsure where to begin and how to proceed. Each chapter concludes with teen services librarian partnership case studies that include what the outreach effort, library services, and programs look like: their overview, setup, welcome, activity, and reflection. The level of detail provided – what to consider throughout the planning and delivery of services – will be astonishingly helpful for librarians as they consider, establish, and implement these “specialized” teen services.

First, the author considers why teens deserve specialized attention. No longer children yet not fully adult, these teens operate under the library's radar. Jess Snow recommends partnering with social service organizations and agencies to develop programs and services for teens with little or no access to a library. In the book's introduction, Snow explains how the Boston Public Library partnered with Massachusetts' Department of Youth Services (DYS). Some of the details about the project include how to check books out to incarcerated teens; preparing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly states each party's responsibilities; explaining why involving other librarians in the service is critical to its success and how to win their support for the project; creating a survey for getting feedback from participants; and issuing library cards to be used when the teens leave DHS.

In Chapter 1, *What Outreach May Look Like*, Snow reminds the reader that library services and outreach efforts to underserved areas and marginalized populations in the U.S. have evolved, assuming many guises depending on the circumstances and targeted audience. These groups may have been ignored by libraries due to their remote location, such as rural areas or Native American reservations; prevented from coming into the library to access materials, due to physical or mental disabilities; or faced other barriers because they do not speak English.

How to Create Partnerships helps the reader understand the types of youth facilities in which teens reside where access to library materials (or other efforts that support reading) is limited. Snow indicates in Chapter 2 the range of library services and programs that can be provided, how to navigate clearances for working in these facilities, and how creating true partnerships with these external organizations can improve their chances for success. Most readers will be familiar with some of these facilities, but others should not be overlooked as opportunities for your teen library program, including homeless shelters, foster homes, group homes, residential facilities, independent living

skills programs, juvenile detention, day centers for court-involved youth, alternative schools, alcohol and drug recovery high schools, organizations working with immigrant and refugee teens, and agencies working with LGBTQIA. (A list of national organizations serving teens appears in Chapter 7, the *Appendix*.)

The Role of Staff in Providing Outreach (Chapter 3) identifies those in your library who can contribute to the outreach effort. Here, the author leans on the characteristics of effective teen librarians developed by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). A sample position description and a curriculum for a teen librarian internship program form the core of the chapter.

How to Identify Goals and Outcomes for Outreach Services (Chapter 4) presents examples of goals for the teen services, accompanied by actions that librarians might take to meet these goals. Recognizing that the library and partnering organization will want to gauge the impact of these programs, Snow shares how to collect feedback from participants. Also, these evaluations can be used to obtain future funding from third-party grantee organizations. Worksheets for creating outreach plans, MOUs, and surveys for collecting feedback appear in Chapter 7, the *Appendix*.

As digital literacy is a critical skill for the 21st century, Snow introduces the reader to solutions for creating technology programs even at facilities where teens have little or no access to the internet (Chapter 5, *Incorporating Technology into Your Outreach*). Collection development skills are needed to create a core collection for these teens, as well as schemes for funding these acquisitions and transporting them to/from facilities (Chapter 6, *How to Create a Core Collection for Outreach*). Additional resource lists in the *Appendix* (Chapter 7) are selection tools and core titles, staff training resources, and open-sources free to download.

All teen librarians wishing to diversify the types of programs conducted for teens in their community should consider these underserved populations and begin to include them as part of their remit. This book, despite its misleading title, would be an excellent resource for the effort.