

Designing a Webinar for Teen Librarians: Tips, Tricks, and Trying Your Best

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The Problem

In previous research done by members of this team, we found a gap in the literature about information needs, behavior, and access of teens with disabilities in libraries. Two questions we sought to answer:

- How are public and school libraries currently meeting disabled teens' needs?
- What can libraries do to better meet this population's needs?



What We Did

- Surveyed librarians, special education teachers, and a vocational counselor about current services.
- Compiled recommendations for improved accessibility, collection development, and programming into a webinar aimed at youth librarians in public and school libraries.
- Delivered live webinar and sent recording to research participants and other interested parties.

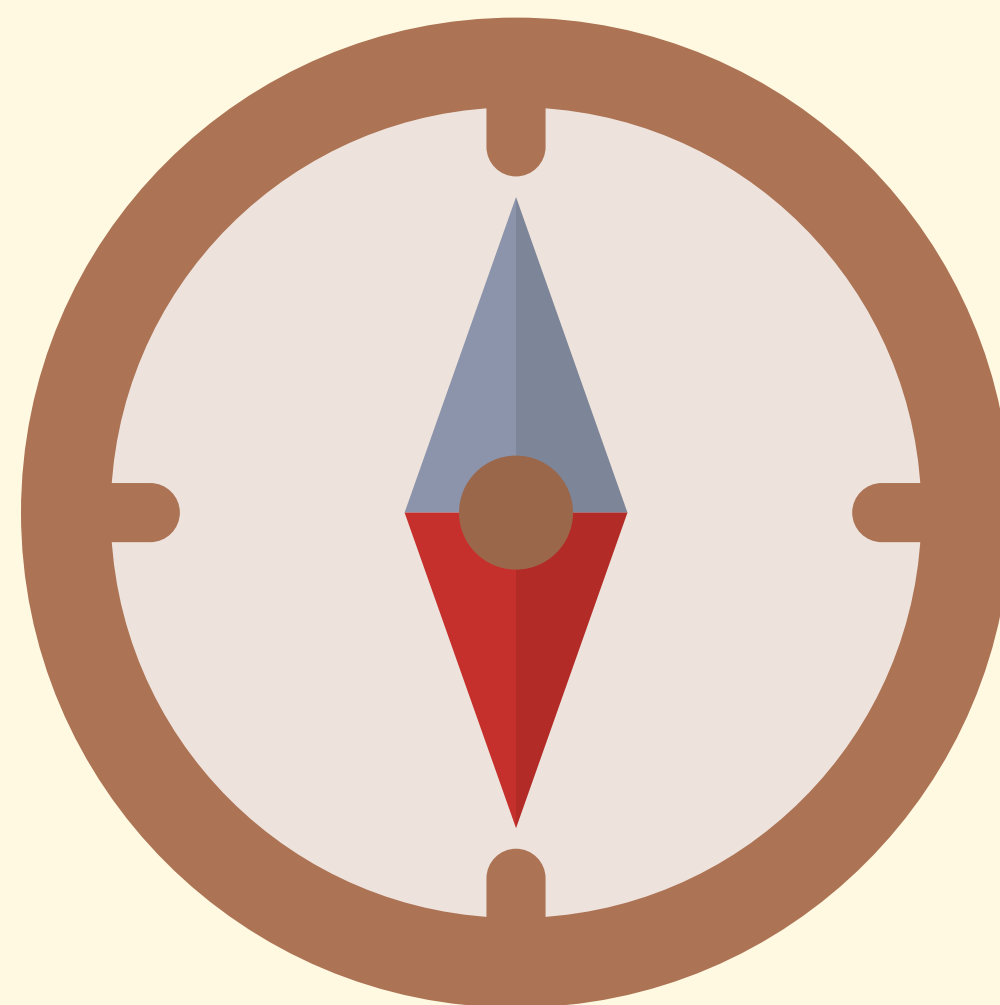
How can youth and school librarians more effectively serve teens with disabilities?

"As a person with a disability, I find that despite libraries' good intentions, sometimes our services fall short for marginalized customers."

"Accommodations don't need to be complicated or a material item, staff that are trained and engage with students will increase their use and level of enjoyment in the library. If a student can engage with the staff, the staff can help them access the right accommodations or give them directions to the things they need."

Impact

In forming our recommendations, we subscribed to universal design theory, in which educational programs and spaces are built with accessibility in mind from the beginning. Training our colleagues in how to be more proactive in their approach to serving disabled teens will improve the library experience for this population.



The Future

More work needs to be done in researching the information needs and behavior of teens with disabilities, as we were unable to speak to actual teens. Unfortunately, most of the existing research deals with young children or adults; teens with disabilities remain more or less invisible in the literature.