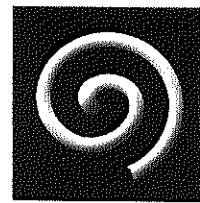


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# **Teen Services Today**

## **A Practical Guide for Librarians**



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**PRACTICAL GUIDES FOR LIBRARIANS, NO. 27**

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD  
*Lanham • Boulder • New York • London*

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The Middletown Public Library (New Jersey) hosted a Masquerade Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre and invited all the teens who joined the teen summer reading club to attend. The mystery was written by the library's Teen Writing Club, performed by writing club members and the Teen Advisory Board. On the day of the event, pizza was served and the invited teens ate dinner with the performers before the victim "died in dramatic fashion," and the mystery began. The invited teens were divided into groups and began questioning the remaining suspects before submitting their thoughts about who killed the victim, and the final scene revealed the killer (Chadwick, 2015).

## Specific Programs

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### After-Hours Parties and/or Lock-Ins

An after-hours party or lock-in can have a theme based on a particular book, movie, or TV show, or it can have a general theme relating to the time of year or special events going on in your community. For example, the Boulder Public Library (Colorado) has held a Harry Potter Yule Ball, the Manvel Branch Library (Texas) has held a Food In, which was a food-themed lock-in, and the Ritter Public Library (Ohio) has held Shark Week festivities that included a real shark on loan from a local aquarium (Ritter Public Library, 2016).

After-hours events can be held at any library branch no matter how big or small your building. All you need is to make sure you limit the number of attendees if you work at a smaller library, or have enough extra staff on hand if you work at a larger library. Registration is an excellent tool to ensure not only that you have enough space and staff, but that you have enough food and supplies.

Another important item to factor in is your library's budget. Hooray if you have an amazing Friends group to help fund your events. You're all set. You can go all out on decorations, food, crafts, and any other activities you decide to do during the event. Conversely, even if you're on a shoestring budget, you can still host a fabulous party. Pinterest is an excellent resource for great, low-cost ideas. Another great resource is local businesses. Don't forget to ask them for donations. Many times they are more than willing to donate food and/or supplies.

When planning an after-hours event, make sure you have approval from your administration to host an event while the library is closed to the public. Also remember to double-check any other policies your library might have in place. For example, in the Brazoria County Library System (Texas), a constable from the Sheriff's Department is required to be on the premises during after-hours events, and permission slips (see the box for an example) signed by a parent or guardian are required before teens are allowed in the door (Threadgill, 2012).

When planning any after-hours event, remember that the teens may not know each other and may arrive later than the advertised time. That gives you the perfect opportunity for some icebreakers. First, of course, have the teens introduce themselves. One of the best games to help everyone become comfortable is Hangman, a simple guessing game to determine a word or phrase within a specific number of guesses. Many times the teens look askance at such a childish game, but after about two rounds, they become far more competitive and will do whatever they can to keep the man from being hanged. They'll encourage you to draw a complete face, clothing, and even fingers and toes in order to keep playing until someone knows the answer.

## LOCK-IN EVENT PERMISSION SLIP

This form is provided as a sample. You would need to adapt it to your library's specific rules and policies.

I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_  
(son/daughter's name) to attend the Lock-In Event at the Anytown Public Library from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, June 9. The building will be locked during this event for the safety of both staff and participating teens. Doors will be unlocked at 8:45 p.m. so teens can be picked up by parents.\*

I may be reached at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone/cell phone). I understand that if my child engages in inappropriate behavior I could be called and asked to pick him/her up immediately, plus my teen may be not allowed to attend future events.

Appropriate behavior includes:

1. Staying in assigned/supervised areas and following instructions/directions from all event supervisors.
2. Helping to keep the library clean during the event and cleaning up at the end of the evening.
3. Being respectful of general library rules, furnishings, and materials.
4. One warning will be given before parent is called and the teen is sent home.

Teen Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED LIMITED TO 20 TEENS

\*If you need to leave before 8:45 p.m., you must tell the library staff when you arrive. Since teens cannot leave unsupervised, without calling their parents to pick them up, we expect all attendees to stay for the entire event.

## Comic Con Lock-In

Don't focus on one specific fandom if the goal is to appeal to as many teens as possible. Incorporate characters from all franchises, movies, television, video games, and books. Using the characters you are incorporating into your event will help determine specific activities you can have. Race up and down the aisles of the library like the Flash. Host a Quidditch tournament. Crawl through Spider-Man's web. Design your own lightsaber like a *Star Wars* hero (or villain). Create your own comic book photo panel.

The Boardwalk Branch Library (Missouri) hosted a Comic Con Lock-In and invited representatives from a local cosplay group to judge some of the contests during the

lock-in. In addition to a cosplay contest, teens could participate in tabletop Quidditch, Pictionary, trivia, and a photo booth. Crafts included buttons, Doctor Who bowties, 3D glasses, Wonder Woman tiaras, and Princess Leia buns (Bingham, 2015).

## Food In

If you feed them, they will come. A Food In is obviously ideal for this philosophy. From blind taste tests to cookie decorating to eating challenges, the list of activities you can offer is limited only by your budget and time.

The Manvel Branch Library (Texas) hosted several taste tests between name-brand items, store-brand items, and a combination of the two. The taste tests covered sodas, potato chips, grape juice, and more. (For the record, in a unanimous decision, Pepsi beat Coke.) In addition to a cookie decorating race, relay races were held in which the teens were challenged to find the hidden candy buried in whipped cream without using their hands. These resulted in faces full of whipped cream and icing everywhere. Even staff couldn't avoid the mess! The evening wrapped up with everyone making their own candy sushi and groaning about eating way too much.

## Harry Potter Yule Ball or Birthday Party

Harry Potter is a character that appeals to all ages, so don't be surprised if you have children and adults who want to come to this event. You can make this as large or as intimate as you choose. If you only have space and staff for a small event, you may want to choose one of the books and create activities and crafts specific to that book. For example, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* would be a great choice because you can draw your own dragon, create a merperson language, solve a maze, answer riddles, dance at a ball, play Quidditch, design a Triwizard Cup, or even write a newspaper article for the *Daily Prophet*.

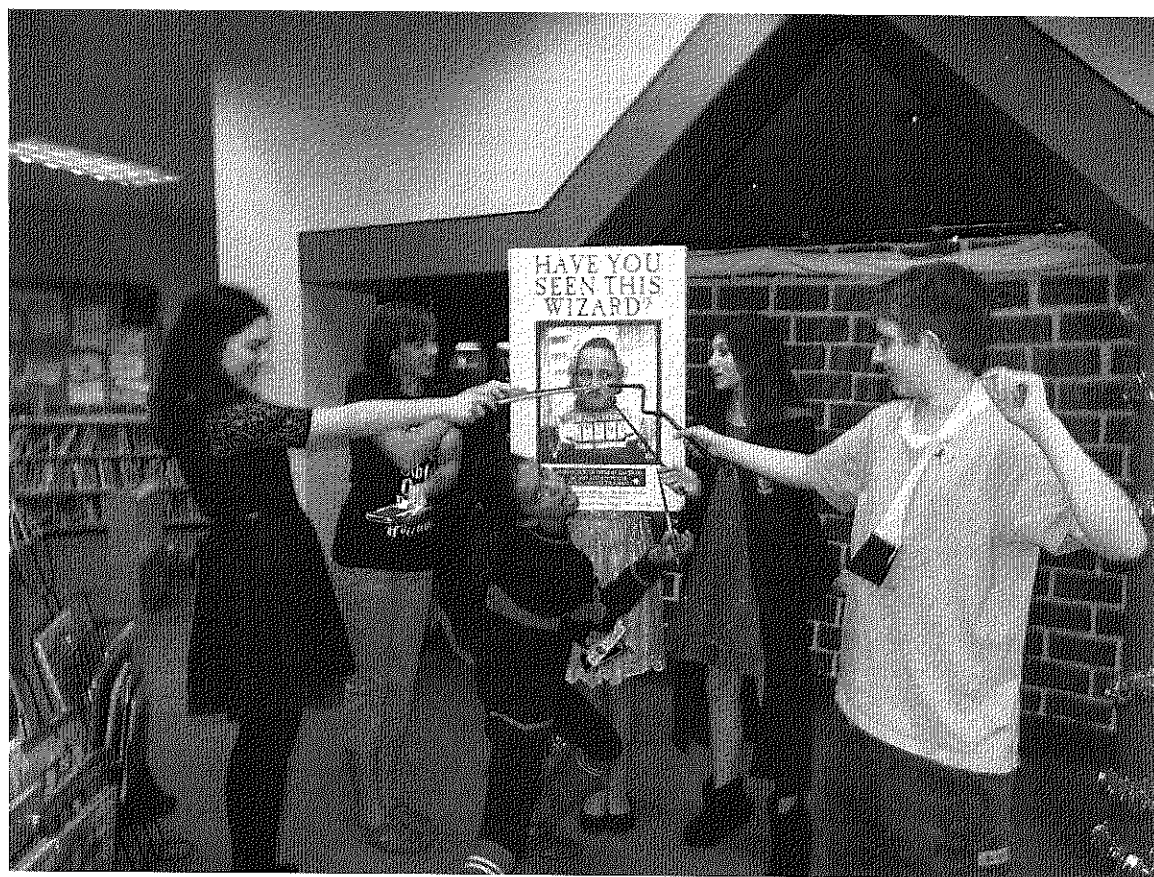
The Lake Jackson Branch Library (Texas) picked a little from here and a little from there and created a Yule Ball full of events from all the books. Upon entering, the teens were sorted by the Sorting Hat (a hidden staff member with a walkie-talkie), and encouraged to sit at their house tables. There was food only found in the wonderful world of Harry Potter, such as butterbeer and chocolate frogs. Teens got a chance to test their wizarding knowledge with a trivia competition between the houses. Everyone designed their own wands, and fortunately the wands they designed "chose" the correct wizards. Figure 5.4 shows the teens with their wands. They got to create their own potion mixtures. They even participated in a relay race between the houses. Each team had to find each of the seven Horcruxes hidden in stations around the library.

## Technology-Related Programs

As society moves more and more into the realm of technology, library events are beginning to reflect this trend. While gaming is the most popular technology-related type of programming, and it does fall into this category, it is not the only option found in libraries.

## Gaming

As mentioned in the "Groups" section, online and digital gaming clubs are growing in popularity, but you don't have to create a "club" to host a gaming event. You can start sim-



**Figure 5.4.** Teens raise their wands high at the Harry Potter Yule Ball. *Photo courtesy of Brazoria County Library System in Texas*

ple with a random Saturday or after-school game time. Set up your Wii or PlayStation for an hour of fun. There are plenty of games rated “T” for teen if you want to limit your attendees, and there are even more rated “E” for everyone if you want to broaden your scopes. The Angleton Branch Library (Texas) hosted a Just Dance Dance Tournament using the popular *Just Dance* game series. The winner of the tournament got a mirror ball trophy, à la *Dancing with the Stars*. The Tualatin Public Library (Oregon) makes sure teens can’t cheat the game by offering Flavor Points, which the librarian tracks on a spreadsheet (see figure 5.5). This ensures that teens put forth some effort in their dance moves to win the gift card prizes (Meuchel, 2015).

## Artemis

Another gaming option is a multiplayer cooperative game. If you’re part of a library system or just friendly with other libraries in your area, a multiplayer cooperative game is a great way to expand your programming and connect your teens to other teens with similar interests. A good, low-cost example of this is *Artemis: Spaceship Bridge Simulator*. *Artemis* is a computer game designed by Thomas Robertson. It is a spaceship simulation game that allows teens to fill the roles of officers on the bridge of a spaceship, like those in *Star Trek*. The cost for the program is minimal, but it does require up to six computers that can be networked; one of the computers acts as the server. The roles the teens play are captain, engineer, helm, science, weapons, and communications. Teens battle alien ships

C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
<b>Song 1</b>	<b>Bang Bang</b>				<b>Song 2</b>	<b>Problem</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Flavor</b>		<b>Name</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Flavor</b>
Rachel	5350	3	25		Rachel	7585	4	35
Angel	9593	1	35		Peter	4005	6	20
Charlie	4975	4	30		Jacob	8672	2	45
Anthony	4479	5	30		Angel	9378	1	30
Peter	3287	6	20		Charlie	8557	3	45
Jacob	6180	2	40		Anthony	7005	5	35
<b>Song 4</b>	<b>Burn</b>				<b>Song 5</b>	<b>4x4</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Flavor</b>		<b>Name</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Flavor</b>
Rachel	7669	3	35		Rachel	8660	2	45
Anthony	6709	5	45		Angel	9576	1	40
Peter	6445	6	25		Jacob	8365	3	40
Angel	8281	2	30		Charlie	7275	4	40
Jacob	9585	1	40		Peter	2250	6	30
Charlie	7421	4	35		Anthony	3902	5	50

**Figure 5.5.** The points spreadsheet with Flavor scores used to prevent cheating. *Spreadsheet courtesy of Aimee Meuchel of Tualatin Public Library in Oregon*

and can negotiate with hostile enemies, but it's more fun to blow them up. As with Harry Potter, you can make this more elaborate with costumes and even battle another branch or library for space supremacy.

## Makerspaces

Before society began treating many things as disposable, people used to repair broken equipment or make something that would serve their purpose. With the increased popularity of websites, how-to videos, and blogs that encourage crafting and do-it-yourself work, this idea is now being revived as makerspaces, also known as hackerspaces, hackspaces, and FabLabs (Cavalcanti, 2013).

Makerspaces allow people to gather together and pool their resources and knowledge to create things with others. These can be as simple as learning to sew or as complicated as programming a motherboard or building a robot. Libraries have stepped into this process and begun to offer resources. Lorcan Dempsey of OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) observed that "space is being reconfigured around broader education and research needs, and less around the management of print collection [*sic*]. In effect, space is shifting from infrastructure to engagement" (Metropolitan New York Library Council, 2012). Simple craft needs such as knitting needles, button makers, or even sewing machines can be cataloged and used in the library. Depending on your library's policies and the administration's willingness, you could also circulate these types of items.

If you're looking to start a makerspace at your library, or just want to know more about it, visit the Hackerspaces Wiki. This wiki "connects makerspaces around the world,

defining them as ‘community-operated physical places, where people can meet and work on their projects’” (Breitkopf, 2011).

Makerspaces are not about just having these supplies on hand for patrons. There are many ways they can be utilized—“open areas to encourage collaborative work among small groups, more technical, workshop-like spaces, or souped-up computer stations” (Metropolitan New York Library Council, 2012). Teens can use the equipment in your makerspace to create projects, to teach others, or to learn from others in the community. Working with the makerspace equipment in your library and teaching new skills to teens offers a host of programming opportunities.

If space is a concern, and you’re not able to convert part of your library into a music studio, for example, don’t worry. You can still create a makerspace. Smaller groups, such as writing groups or craft classes, are considered makerspaces just as much as a computer programming station. Makerspaces aren’t only about building and creating, but about teaching, learning, and working together. Knitting classes can involve several generations if you invite adult knitters to teach the teens. You can use a button maker to allow teens to design their own buttons and express their own creative identities.

One of the more eye-catching aspects of makerspaces are 3D printers. If your library has the budget to purchase and maintain a 3D printer, then you have a built-in appeal factor for the public, especially in areas where this kind of technology is still new. The Atlantic City Free Public Library in New Jersey received \$7,500 in funding to establish a makerspace with a 3D printer and other technologies (Atlantic City Free Public Library, 2015).

3D printers can create a seemingly unending list of products, from simple items like rulers to more complicated items like prosthetics. Stories pop up on the news about students designing a limb for a fellow classmate (Estes, 2014). The benefits of providing a 3D printer reach far beyond the library’s walls and can impact someone’s life in unimaginable ways.

## **Sports and Fitness Programs**

Library teen programming can cover a wide variety of fields and subjects including sports and fitness. These programs can range from forming a team and teaching a sport, such as softball, bowling, or even Quidditch, to sports-themed indoor events, such as a paper football tournament, to holding periodic fitness classes, such as Zumba.

### **Paper Football**

Knowing how to fold a piece of paper into a triangular, football-like shape is somehow ingrained in the minds of every young teen. Why not put those skills to the test with a paper football tournament? You can build your own goalposts using some poster board, pipe cleaners, or whatever is handy; you can go the traditional route and let the teens be the goalposts; you might even find suction-cup goalposts at your local dollar, party, or novelty store. The Middletown Township Public Library decorated a table with green felt, used masking tape to mark the yard lines, and stacked cups on either end for the goalposts (Chadwick, 2015). Once you’re all set, let the tournament begin! You can set the tournament up as a bracket tournament with one person winning it all or a series of individual competitions. Who scores the most points? Whose football goes the farthest? Whose football is the most accurate? Tie this event to the Super Bowl, and remember, if



you feed them, they will come, so offer the standard football fare of nachos, popcorn, and soda for a day of sports fun.

## Fitness Class

Contact a local fitness studio, recreation center, or gym to see if one of the instructors would be willing to donate his or her time to host a class. Instructors might ask to promote their own studios or classes, and your library policies will determine whether or not this is acceptable.

Don't forget to provide refreshments because, it can't be said enough, if you feed them, they will come. Since this is a fitness class, offer water and fresh fruit to carry on the theme of health and fitness. Also, don't forget that you might need to ask teens to bring some of their own supplies, such as towels or mats.

## Writing and Poetry Programs

Several opportunities to encourage teens to write can be incorporated into your programming. The simplest is to form a regularly scheduled writers' group for teens to gather and write in a safe, quiet space.

If you don't have the opportunity to do that, you can offer time during National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo. NaNoWriMo events are held nationwide throughout November with the goal being to write a finished draft of a fifty-thousand-word novel by the end of the month. Libraries can join as official locations on the NaNoWriMo website, or you can unofficially encourage writers. Although NaNoWriMo is not specifically for teens, you can choose to limit events to teens or open it to writers of all ages. Teens can learn from the adult writers who attend events and vice versa.

## Writing Workshops

Hosting a writing workshop is an excellent opportunity for teens to get a behind-the-scenes look into the world of being a writer. Don't be intimidated by this prospect if you're not a writer. Writers are everywhere—your community's newspaper, local bloggers, and other media outlets. You can also find area writers' groups online; when thinking about the area around your library, cast a wide net. Every state has a chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). Since SCBWI authors write for children and teens, they are ideal choices to lead a writing workshop for teens as they're already comfortable speaking with them. Contact the regional advisors for SCBWI chapters that are near you. They are happy to pass on opportunities to the authors and illustrators in their chapters.

Authors will contact you. They love the opportunity to speak with readers and fellow writers and might even be willing to do this for free or for a significantly reduced rate. You don't have to find "name" authors, either. Even people who are unpublished or newly published have much to offer young writers. Remember to leave time for questions, but don't forget to have a few ready to ask—just in case the teen writers are too shy.

The Sylvan Oaks Library (California) hosted a series of workshops over twelve weeks. A collection of the teens' writings was published by the library system's print-on-demand service with each participant receiving one free copy (Sacramento Public Library, 2015).

## Blackout Poetry

Poetry is a common outlet for teens to express themselves. Libraries can host poetry programs that even the least poetically inclined teen can participate in. One example is blackout poetry. Blackout poetry is a type of found poetry, which takes published works in order to “refashion them, reorder them, and present them as poems” (Academy of American Poets, 2015). Taking a page from a book, the teens circle the words they will use to create their found poem. Then they black out the remainder of the text with a marker. All that remains visible is their poem, which can then be embellished with decoration and flourishes (see figure 5.6).

Blackout poetry programs can serve a dual purpose. While one option is to photocopy book pages to get your text to the teens, another is using old or damaged books. That’s right, this program allows you to recycle donated materials that can’t be added to the collection or weeded books that have lived their library life. April is the perfect time



**Figure 5.6.** An elaborate blackout poem. Photo courtesy of Attleboro Public Library in Massachusetts

to host this program because not only is it National Poetry Month, but Earth Day is in April, too.

The Attleboro Public Library (Massachusetts) hosted a blackout poetry program that included readings of the poems at the conclusion of the event. Using discarded books and permanent markers, the program was simple to create and low cost. Remember to use discarded books that are age appropriate to avoid any potential problems with “adult words” (Witherell, 2015).

## Holiday-Related Programs

Although the holidays are often a time that teens spend with their families, there are some holidays that lend themselves to library programming and that have a particular appeal to teens. While you might not expect a crowd if you planned an event for Thanksgiving or Christmas, you can still make plans for other holidays.

## Scary Stories

Storytelling is an art that has been around since early mankind. Scary stories are one of the best types of stories to tell. From urban legends to summer camp scares to the monster under the bed, people love to be scared, and scary stories are a part of every culture. People love to share them again and again. Scary stories teach listeners ways to avoid threats and ways to deal with those threats, as Bruno Bettelheim discusses in his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Bettelheim (1976) analyzes traditional fairy tales, such as those collected by the Brothers Grimm, which contain a great deal of scary elements—witches, death, abandonment, and torture. Bettelheim argues that those stories allowed children to process their own fears in an abstract way. You can continue this tradition in a fun, safe way for teens, and Halloween is an ideal time to host a scary stories event.

Turn out all lights. Have a flashlight handy. Tell traditional ghost stories, urban legends, or traditional fairy tales, or even read a short story. One librarian only tells true scary stories—things that happened to her or people she knows. You might have local legends to rely on as well. In the New Jersey area, teens can be terrified by the story of the Jersey Devil. Mothman haunts people in West Virginia.

You can also turn this into a creative exercise. Use examples of two-sentence horror stories and have teens create their own. Post them on a bulletin board or online and have the public vote for their favorite.

## Zombie Walk

Many cities and organizations around the country host zombie walks as a way to raise money for various causes (Leroux, 2013). The library can do this, too, either as a fundraiser or simply as a fun event for all involved. Although Halloween is the perfect time of year for a zombie walk, they can be held anytime.

Hosting a zombie event requires a great deal of planning. You can buy bagged candy that’s designed to look like random body parts such as eyeballs, fingers, or brains, or you can get completely extravagant and create a zombie meal.

Contact local makeup artists, such as at department or beauty supply stores, to have them help zombify any teens who need assistance in that area. Hold contests for various

categories, including Scariest Costume, Bloodiest Costume, Best Zombie Moan, and Slowest Shuffle, among others. Turn it into a community event and arrange to have candy at nearby participating offices, buildings, or parks, and parade over there to demand “brains.” The Kenton County Public Library (Kentucky) hosted a Zombie Walk and also included a daylong schedule of activities that included movies, makeup artists, costumes, a genealogy program called “Evening with the Ancestors/Bringing Up the Dead,” and a Zombie Prom. There were activities for all ages throughout the day (Pilkington, 2015).

The Middletown Public Library (New Jersey) took a different approach. In addition to makeup and photos, the librarian created Zombie Tag. Teens drew cards to tell them if they were zombies or humans. Other cards hidden around the room gave players immunity or did not help at all. Zombies had to chase the humans using only a slow zombie walk, and the game ended when only one human remained (Chadwick, 2015).

Like Harry Potter, zombies appeal to a wide range of ages. Don't be surprised if adults and children both want to participate.

## Valentines for Vets

Valentine's Day is a special day for people to share with their loved ones, and teens are no exception. However, you can encourage a bit of selflessness on teens' parts by hosting a Valentines for Vets program.

Although the United States honors veterans on Veterans Day in November, Valentine's Day is great opportunity to thank local veterans for their service and sacrifice. The idea is not to thank specific people, necessarily, but to create cards that can be distributed at area veterans' hospitals and clinics or local Veterans of Foreign Wars meetings. You can make this as simple or elaborate as you want.

For a basic passive program, have card-making supplies sitting out for teens—or any other patrons—to make a valentine or two for veterans. Make sure you're clear in your instructions that the cards will be sent to veterans and not veterinarians. You might also choose to review the cards before you bring them to the veterans to make sure there isn't anything inappropriate inside.

If you prefer to do something more in depth, host a card-making event with the end result being beautiful handmade cards for veterans. Teens can also create cards for their personal loved ones during a card-making event.

## Presenters and Special Guests

Having a special guest come to the library can be tricky. If your teen program is still growing, you may want to wait to host outside speakers. The beauty and the curse of public libraries is the inability to know how many people will come to any given event. It can be humiliating to host a speaker and have no one show up, and depending on the speaker, it may also be costly. You and your staff know what your community will enjoy, and you should gauge accordingly.

## Author Visits

As mentioned with the writing workshops, find local writers' groups online and contact them. The SCBWI website has information about speakers, and as stated earlier, many of them are comfortable talking with teens. Some may not charge at all to visit your library;

some may. Others might be willing to do Skype or Google Hangout visits for free. Online video chatting with an author is an excellent opportunity for book clubs.

If you're lucky enough to have a local bookstore, meet with the manager and see if the store has any upcoming author visits. Check with the schools in your area. They may have authors coming to speak with the students. It's possible for you to partner with either a bookstore or a school on an author visit. Consider your budget carefully as author visits can be a costly endeavor, especially if you live more than an hour from an airport. If the author has to rent a vehicle or someone on staff has to pick the author up at the airport, that adds extra expenses to an already pricey venture.

## Local Experts

As stated earlier, teens' interests are more specific and varied. Inviting local experts to give presentations or host programs at the library is a good way to encourage and expand those interests. No matter where you live, someone in your community is an expert in something. You could invite a local hairstylist or cosmetologist for a "Beauty Day at the Library" event. This would attract the teens who aspire join that career field as well as the everyday teens who are just curious about beauty tips.

This could also be a great opportunity to partner with the schools in your area. If your local high school has an engineering club, for example, you could invite local architects or engineers to the library to discuss their careers. They could even bring examples of projects for display or activities for the teens to participate in.

Community organizations offer opportunities for speakers, too. Wildlife rehabilitators can discuss what to do when you find an injured animal and might even bring some animals with them to the library. Park rangers can teach teens how to survive in the wild. Crime scene investigators can discuss the training and skills required to do their jobs.

Hosting local experts is usually free or low cost. For some, a simple donation to the organization is sufficient. The Lake Jackson Branch Library (Texas) encourages people to bring towels when the wildlife rehabilitators come to speak. This works as a form of payment for the group as they always need towels, and it is something the public can provide.

## Life-Size Board Games

Think about the games you played as a child and teen. Can those be expanded to a life-size scale? This is a situation of "if you can imagine it, it can be done." There are no limits to what you can create. However, you do need to keep the limitations of your building, staff, budget, and time in mind. Life-size Hungry, Hungry Hippos is a great idea and is potentially hours of limitless fun, but if your library is on the smaller side, or you don't have access to a meeting room, it just won't work. On the other hand, life-size Clue can be played practically anywhere.

For life-size games, you can still follow the board games' rules—only the board has changed. You can also modify the rules to accommodate your building's space or the number of teens who attend. Teens get the chance to live in a game they've played before. It's an opportunity to cross the Gumdrop Pass, find out who killed Mr. Boddy, or feed those poor, starving hippos in real life. You could even show a movie—*Wreck-It Ralph*, *Clue*, *Madagascar*—to wind down afterward.

## Clue

You can run a life-size Clue game in one of two ways. For the first option, you will simply expand the board game. You will need to gather your weapons, and you might even include simple costumes for the characters—a peacock feather for Mrs. Peacock or a purple tie for Professor Plum. Decide which parts of the library will be which rooms on the game board. The meeting room makes a great ballroom, and you could even use the staff break room as the kitchen. Don't limit yourself solely to your usual programming space. Spread out. Involve the whole building and staff (see figure 5.7). What better way to introduce teens to all the library has to offer than to have them wander through the stacks as they try to determine who killed Mr. Boddy? Don't forget that you can include a viewing of the movie *Clue* if you have a license.

Another way to solve the murder is to re-create the game within the library setting. Game characters can be popular book characters such as Harry Potter, Katniss Everdeen, or Percy Jackson. Instead of turning the library into the game board, use library spaces—



**Figure 5.7.** Suspect cards feature staff and teens during a game of life-size Clue. Photo courtesy of DeKalb Public Library in Illinois

the computer area, circulation desk, children's area, and so forth—as potential murder sites. The methods of murder can be library hazards, such as being strangled by a mouse cord, run over by a book truck, or trampled by running children. Again, spread out and use the whole building. If there is something unique about your building, incorporate that into the game. Be as creative as you want. Not only does it make your game better, but the teens will get excited to go places they are normally banned from going, such as behind the circulation desk.

## Candy Land

Candy Land requires more effort and time in preparation. You need to build “candy.” Pool noodles spiraled and attached to PVC pipe make great lollipops. You can also use colored cellophane over Styrofoam if that's easier. Wrap Styrofoam bowls and plates in colored cellophane for candies. Laminate large pieces of construction paper for game tiles, and lay your path around the library. Don't forget to include the special tiles for the Gumdrop Pass, Peppermint Forest, and all the other sweet, candy-filled places (see figure 5.8). Have a spinner ready and candy for prizes, and you're ready for the fun to begin.

The Wichita Falls Public Library created Candy Land in their meeting room using lots of paper and cardboard along with pool noodles, balloons, and one staff member's borrowed candy cane Christmas decorations. They modified the rules a bit by having a spinner and divided the attendees into teams. One team was allowed to begin when the



**Figure 5.8.** The ice cream sea in a life-size game of Candy Land. *Photo courtesy of Wichita Falls Public Library in Texas*

previous team had reached the halfway point. Waiting teams could create candy-related crafts until they could play the game (Marsh, 2015).

## Key Points

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Today's teens have a great deal of pressure being placed on them from parents, school, and the community. The library can be a place of respite from all those outside pressures by offering fun programs and the opportunity to socialize. And food. Never forget the food because if you feed them, they will come. Programming for younger teens presents librarians with challenges and opportunities, so you need to remember:

- Create programs that allow teens to see the library as worth working into their schedules.
- Advertise according to your community's needs.
- Remember the varied interests of teens and adjust attendance expectations accordingly.
- Establish regular group meetings.
- Develop a teen advisory board or informally use teens in your library as a board.

Older teens may attend some of these programs, but they have a completely different set of worries and concerns that the library can address. Working with this group of teens is the topic of the next chapter.

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