

Looking Down the Road at Children's and Teen's Services

By Cristina Freire.

In the BC Library Conference session "Looking Down the Road at Children's and Teen's Services" librarians from Burnaby Public Library, Vancouver Public Library and the West Vancouver Memorial Library spoke from their own perspectives and experience about what they see coming down the road in Children's and Teen's Services.

The speakers at the session were:

- Vicki Donoghue, Burnaby Public Library, Children's and Teen Services Coordinator
- Julie Iannacone, Manager of Services for Children & Teens at the Vancouver Public Library
- Shannon Ozirny, Head of Youth Services at the West Vancouver Memorial Library

Topics covered included technology, working in collaboration and partnership, and continuing education. The common thread through all the topics discussed was the importance of collaboration. We are working with collaborative technologies, we have 21st century learners and literacies that emphasize collaboration, and we have the public library staying relevant and being seen in our communities through collaborative partnerships with other community organizations.

While working in collaboration with community groups, we must consider those library resources that other partner organizations don't have but could benefit from, such as staff, secure funding, and vehicles. The library needs to be flexible about its programs, as well as the location and times of those programs. In order to assess where best to focus our resources and make the biggest impact, we must first know our communities. This means getting out in the community and connecting, both as the library and as individual people. In order to have knowledge of the community's needs and wants, Children's and

Teen's Services must connect with service providers in the broader community and go where the families are. We need to know if and how other community groups' values match those of the library and its strategic plan.

While working with and collaborating with teens, the library must create a mutually beneficial environment, and this means projects and programs are done for more than just the sake of doing them. There must be a benefit to both the library and the teens participating in the project.

Public opinion is powerful and therefore it is important to care if people trust the library. Every interaction with the public has potential to add or take away from the library's credibility. The public and the community bring with them a community of trust. If there's one parent who trusts the library, that parent can be involved in other community groups or even be a community leader themselves, then the library can gain credibility with a larger group. We want the public to be speaking about library programs and services. Partnering with established professionals and organizations, therefore, can help the library gain credibility in the larger community.

As librarians, we need to be clear about our professional credentials and know what we are bringing to a partnership and what the group we're working with brings to a partnership, and realize it may not be equal. This is the time to be sharing our skills, presenting proposals, supporting colleagues in their ideas, and looking at new resources and sharing those resources and discoveries with each other.

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