

New Century, New Acronym: Technology Advisory for Youth

By Yasmin Jamal.

There is a saying that "books work harder" in the Youth Department due to all the chewing, staining and backpack carrying that they endure every day. Did you know that technology has to work harder too! Our four presenters believe that Technology Advisory (TA) is an essential skill for youth librarians today. In a span of forty five minutes, Ozirny, Felkar, Longley & Hockin revealed their secrets to successful TA and tech programming for kids and teens.

Attendees left with a bagful of ideas to bring value-added & embedded technology services for this age group in their libraries, leveraging on resident tech experts within their libraries and fostering technology connections within their local communities.

Information Literacy in the 21st century

The definition of information literacy has become more complex for librarians as resources and technologies have changed. "Information literacy has progressed from the simple definition of using reference resources to finding information. Multiple literacies, including digital, visual, textual, and technological, have now joined information literacy as crucial skills for this century" ([AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner](#), 2007). So, how can public libraries with shrinking budgets connect through technology, foster 21st century literacies and facilitate in ways that people can share and create their own content?

How do we define technology advisory (TA)?

If readers' advisory is all about getting the right book into the reader's hand, then TA is all about getting the right technology into the reader's hand. That sounds simple enough! Not really, as the term 'technology' is broad & encompassing and when one is providing TA, there is a wide range of questions on technology, from selecting an appropriate 'app' to finding an age specific computer game to facilitating a research question for the best reliable sources. These are some of the challenges faced by libraries. However, what are some of the fundamentals of technology advisory?

Shannon Ozirny, Head of Youth Services, West Vancouver Memorial Library (WVML), very succinctly broke this down into two key areas that are fundamental to any public library youth techno program.

1. Finding focus. To find your focus, ask yourself the following questions:

- What 'in house' expertise do we have in the library?
- What are some of the base technology competencies that our staff need to effectively serve our patrons?
- What have you noticed that the youth in your community need when it comes to technology?

2. Using what you have (unless you have a large budget):

- Use the strengths and expertise that you have within your library and staff (use what you have, take an inventory of your technology in the library)
- Embedding technology services for kids and teens
- Community connections
- Youth, your library resident experts!

Embedding Technology Services in your library

Sarah Felkar, Digital Access Librarian from WVML shared a number of ideas on embedding technology services for younger children; one of my favorites was the free Tumblr app download of the story "Nighty, Night". In this interactive bedtime story, which is available in twelve different languages, children go through all the rooms on the farm and turn off the lights so that the animals can sleep. Short repetitive phrases become part of the child's night time vocabulary. Another interesting idea that came up during the session was the technology petting zoo, offering consumer products to library communities and staff for trying & testing in a stress free sales environment. (Hint: London Drugs visits libraries for a free 'show & tell' of their technology products). Check out the [WVML Recommended Apps tumblr site](#).

Connecting readers to good books: How can one improve Readers Advisory (RA) in their library?

WVML shared their new digital solution for promoting digital Readers Advisory (RA) lists for titles recommended by their librarians. Connecting readers to good books via QR codes and shortened link stickers placed at the end of a book, directed readers to 'read-alike' booklists in BiblioCommons. A neat and innovative idea and worth checking out!

"Hot for cold climate crime?" curious? Check this list of Scandinavian crime novels at:
http://westvanlibrary.bibliocommons.com/list/show/161291571_wvmlibrarian/164805222_cold_cases.

The idea is to connect the readers with 'read-alikes' straight from the book!

Fostering tech connections with your library: Sowing the seeds for engaging community partnerships

Tamarack Hockins, Teen Services Technician from Surrey Public Library shared some great insights for fostering connections with the tech communities. Her message was to keep an open mind and connect your libraries strategic plan and goals to fit with the communities around you to foster appropriate tech connections. Join without any expectations and try something NEW! Resources mentioned were the [Webmaker](#) suite of tools, which includes Popcorn Maker, Thimble, X-Ray Goggles, and many, many free resources for educators to teach digital skills and web literacy.

Teen Hackathon is definitely worth a mention. Surrey Public Library (SPL), City Centre Branch recently hosted the first Teen Hackathon during the Spring Break. This was in partnership with the City of Surrey's GIS Team, who led the workshop with special guests from Microsoft and a local teen developer, Aanikh Kler. Check the [article in the local newspaper](#) on this event.

Not familiar with hackathons? Check this out: "[How to Hackathon with Youth](#)" event planning page for hosting a youth hackathon to promote data literacy.

A Makerspace takes over North Vancouver City Library: Leveraging on our resident teen tech experts

Many interesting ideas were shared by Kate Longley, Teen Services Librarian, North Vancouver City Library (NVCL) leveraging on the technological abilities of the teens. By hosting a 'makerspace', the library created an environment that was conducive to making and learning together, at the same time extending learning beyond the classroom where the teens could explore, create and share content. One such innovative program is the Tween Buddy Lego Robotics program offered by North Vancouver City Library. A joint program with the North Shore Community Resources' Something Cool for After School program, the library teamed up to offer hands on learning with Lego Robotics. Participants worked in small groups over a five week period to learn from teen volunteers how to make a motorized LEGO robot and program it to follow their commands! This was truly a 'connected learning' experience whereby the teens with their partnered buddies played & created a robot, inspiring each other at the same time.

A 'movie night in the plaza' is another great idea showcasing partnerships with the local communities. Teen Tech Week is still another way of building awareness to showcase all the non-print resources & services available to teens.

Reaching kids and teens through the public libraries is a natural fit. With all of the above creative ideas presented for kids and teens, our public libraries can certainly bridge the gap between the in-school and after-school time and help the teens to be mentored to and become mentors to develop the technological skills needed in order to be informed citizens in the 21st century. All three public library systems, SPL, NVCL & WVML provided great examples of implementing technology, building community partnerships and building library environments that are powerful, relevant and engaging for kids and teens alike.

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