

**Helping Libraries Meet
the Needs of Diverse
Teens
2012 Final Report**



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I. About the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)

The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) is a national association of over 5,300 librarians, library workers and advocates whose mission is to expand and strengthen library services for teens and young adults. Through its member-driven advocacy, research, and professional development initiatives, YALSA builds the capacity of libraries and librarians to engage, serve, and empower teens and young adults. YALSA is a subspecialty of the American Library Association (ALA), a 501c3 organization that is the world's largest and oldest library organization.

II. Summary

Multiple studies show that teens are reading less often and fewer of them are obtaining critical literacy skills; in addition, today's generation of teens is the most ethnically diverse ever. With the support of the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, YALSA provided needy libraries with mini grants to purchase up-to-date, age appropriate materials published in the community's predominant language and to provide programs and services to teens. Additionally, YALSA created Spanish language resources, including lists of recommended reading, which libraries distributed to teens and their parents/caregivers. YALSA capitalized on two well established initiatives, Teen Read Week™ and summer reading programs, to implement the mini grant program and distribute the Spanish language materials.

Beginning in early 2012 YALSA opened up a round of applications for librarians to apply for one of 20 summer reading mini grants, worth \$1,000 each. A task force comprised of YALSA members with experience in planning and delivering summer reading programs vetted 30 applications and chose the 20 winners.

Also in early 2012 YALSA opened up a round of applications for librarians to apply for one of 40 mini grants, worth \$1,000 each, that librarians could use to support teen interns. The teen interns would be employed to help the library implement its summer reading program. A task force comprised of YALSA members with experience in planning and delivering summer reading programs vetted 40 applications and chose the 38 winners.

All summer reading and teen intern grantees received training via a conference call and a webinar, and throughout the summer interacted with YALSA staff and each other via an interactive online space in ALA Connect. At the end of the summer, grantees participated in a conference call to reflect on the successes and challenges they met.

In the spring of 2012 YALSA also opened up a round of applications for librarians to apply for one of 10 Teen Read Week mini grants, worth \$1,000 each. A task force comprised of YALSA members with experience in planning and delivering Teen Read Week programs vetted 19 applications and chose the 10 winners. Grantees received training via a conference call and a webinar, and are interacting with YALSA staff and each other via an interactive online space in

ALA Connect in preparation for Teen Read Week, which will be celebrated October 14 – 20, 2012.

Giving needy 30 libraries in 24 states (see Appendix A for a map) the chance to purchase resources and implement programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of their community's teens helped make strides toward ensuring the teens develop key literacy skills and the opportunity to take advantage of the many resources libraries offer for personal and educational use. The expected outcome of this program was that more teens in the communities of participating libraries, especially those from diverse backgrounds, have access to appropriate resources and visit their libraries regularly to borrow reading materials and avail themselves of other services the library offers.

For the teen summer intern program, 184 teens worked a combined total of 5,726 hours in their local libraries, providing support to libraries' children's department during their busiest time of the year. The ability for libraries to provide employment to teens, when employment for this age group is at historic lows, made a big impact in their communities.

III. Results and Impact

Goals & Accomplishments:

Goal #1: Increase the ability of needy libraries to identify and provide age and language appropriate reading materials to the teens in their communities.

- Nearly 10,000 teens at 20 separate locations visited their library and read books and other materials as part of the grant-funded summer reading programs
- Began the process for updating the Teen Book Finder app with the 2012 titles of recommended reading

Goal #2: Help ensure libraries have enough staff to provide needed services to children and teens during their busy summer reading programs while providing select neighborhood teens with an opportunity to develop job skills.

- Awarded 37 grants for teen summer interns (out of 40 applicants)
- Directly trained 37 library staff on best practices in working with teen interns

Goal #3 Provide reading resources to teens, parents, librarians and educators

Resources were disseminated to attendees at the following conferences via booths in the exhibit halls:

- Feb. 15 - 18 in San Francisco: [Beyond School Hours Conference](#)
- March 13 - 17 in Philadelphia: [PLA Conference](#)
- March 21 - 23 in Knoxville: [Tennessee Library Assoc. Conference](#)
- April 27 - 29 in Washington DC: [US Science & Engineering Festival](#)
- April 29 - May 2 in Chicago: [International Reading Assoc. Convention](#)

Resources included lists of recommended reading in Spanish and English, demos of the free Teen Book Finder app, information about Teen Read Week and summer reading programs and more.

Method

YALSA utilized its existing communication channels, including its web site, blog, email listservs and Twitter feed to promote the mini grant opportunities. Press releases about the funding opportunities were distributed widely to the library community through ALA's Public Information Office. Resources, including demos of the Teen Book Finder app, were disseminated to attendees at the various conferences.

Grant applications were forwarded to specially appointed YALSA member taskforces, who vetted the applications and chose the winners based on an established set of criteria. All grantees went through two initial training sessions: one via conference call and the other via webinar. For the duration of the project, grantees communicated with one another and with YALSA, as well as exchanged ideas and resources, through a specially created online community.

YALSA also tapped member experts to create online resources and a list of recommended reading for Spanish speaking teens. The online resources were promoted through YALSA's existing communication channels.

Results/Outcomes

In a time when many library budgets have been cut, YALSA, through the support of the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, was able to help 67 libraries in 24 states maintain or even expand their services and resources. YALSA members expressed repeatedly that they appreciated the opportunity to apply for the mini-grants, and those who received the grants commented that the reading and literacy activities they carried out with the teens would not have been possible otherwise. The \$1,000 grants were significant enough to have a sizable impact on the libraries that received them. The mini grants expanded the libraries' capacity so that they could reach more of the community than they had previously. Daniel Tackett from the North Shelby Library in Alabama reported that his library "had a 22% increase in registered teens, a 48% increase in the number of books read during Summer Reading, and a 51% increase in the number of teens attending events during the summer."

Libraries used the grant funds to purchase much needed reading materials as well as provide programs, such as author visits. Nancee Dahms Stinson from the Springfield-Greene County Library District in Missouri noted that "the Library was able to develop book kits that had high teen appeal including an award nominee and potential award nominee." As a result of new materials being available to the teens, "we got reluctant readers to read all summer. For instance, Javier, a teen who had spent most of his free time at the library gaming online or checking out Facebook, spent a great deal of his time at the library and at home reading," Stacy Lienemann from the Watonwan County Library in Minnesota reported.

While the overall goals were to increase the ability of libraries to provide materials, services and resources to targeted groups such as Spanish speaking teens, several libraries did see some unintended outcomes, including changing teen perceptions of libraries, which led to increased use of the library in general, not just for the duration of the grant program. Lindsey Tomsu from La Vista Public Library in Nebraska noted that the biggest achievement of the grant program for her is “all the new faces that are now die hard fans of the library. We had so many programs that were fun that we would not have been able to do without the additional funds.”

Other interesting outcomes were reported also reported by grantees:

- Emily Shade from Huntsville-Madison County Public Library in Alabama noted that “the greatest accomplishment of this summer's festival is the camaraderie that has grown amongst the attendees and the invaluable relationship created between them and the library.”
- “Providing a free movie night to teens that are economically disadvantaged...I think was the biggest success of the program. These programs provided a chance for teens to watch a movie and escape the summer heat; many of whom did not have air conditioning...at home” noted Steven Nicols from the Lenawee County Library in Michigan.

The teen summer intern program succeeded in helping libraries provide better and expanded service to the youth and their families in their community by expanding their staff's capacity. Patricia VanArsdale from the Hussey-Mayfield Memorial Public Library in Indiana noted that the intern grant, “allowed staff to be available to answer reference questions, place customers in study rooms, place items on hold, assist in locating items not on the shelf, and assist adult in signing up for adult summer reading and picking up prizes....Not having to stop and make photocopies or restock prizes has been a huge help to staff.” In addition, library staff learned from the interns. Melissa Rader from the Delafield Public Library in Wisconsin noted, “the biggest success of our intern program was the intergenerational work experience it offered. The youth services staff had such a positive experience working with Gillian [the teen intern] that I think it helped dispel some of those teen stereotypes.”

There were several key unintended consequences that resulted from the teen intern grant:

- Library programs were more popular and better attended because small children responded more enthusiastically to teen interns running the programs than they did to adult staff
- Library staff developed an appreciation for the skills and perspectives that teens had to offer, and broke down negative stereotypes many library staff had of teens
- Teens applied their interests and skills to their internship in ways that helped the library. Additionally, teens gained new skills that will benefit them in both school and future jobs
- The reach of the grant program was larger than the 184 teens that were hired through the internships, because most libraries required resumes and held interviews for the positions. So, teens that weren't ultimately hired still gained valuable real life job searching skills
- Some teen interns are now considering a career in librarianship, based on the positive experience they had during their internship

In terms of the results from YALSA's perspective, the initiative helped position YALSA as responsive to the needs of members and the library community during a difficult time. The

continued economic difficulties have put a real strain on libraries' ability to meet the needs of their community. As a result of libraries' financial hardships, YALSA, whose main source of revenue comes from this community, also felt the economic impact. The grants YALSA was able to offer through the funding provided by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation enabled YALSA to provide needed support to libraries that we would not otherwise have been able to do.

Additionally, the initiative helped YALSA establish stronger ties with state library agency youth consultants, who are important stakeholders in the library community. Historically, this group has focused a significant portion of their work on summer reading programs. This initiative not only gave YALSA a good reason to reach out to these individuals, but it also helped raise the profile of YALSA from this group and increase awareness about our mission, services and resources. As a result, YALSA now offers quarterly free webinars to the youth consultants as well as a free monthly newsletter, which have been well received by many of the youth consultants. Several of them have taken the step to join YALSA as a personal member and to become active in the organization through committee service. Stronger ties with these state level stakeholders can only help YALSA increase its impact.

Selected Media Coverage:

- Dollar General Literacy Foundation Grants Funds to ALSC, YALSA, <http://ow.ly/owQ2k>
- YALSA and the Dollar General Literacy Foundation Award Grants to 40 Libraries, <http://ow.ly/owQeV>
- YALSA Names Niles Public Library Winner of a Dollar General/YALSA Summer Teen Intern Program Grant, <http://ow.ly/owQts>
- OCL Receives YALSA Grant for Teen Read Week, <http://ow.ly/owQET>
- Colony Public Library Wins Grant, <http://ow.ly/owQQz>

IV. Lessons Learned

- **For YALSA:**
 - **Training:**
 - The online community was an efficient means for YALSA to communicate with grantees; however, not all grantees were comfortable with using this social media tool, so some basic training on how to use it would be helpful to incorporate moving forward.
 - The summer reading program grantees indicated that their greatest need was help with marketing and public relations. In the future, a specific training session for each of these topics, as well as more robust resources in the online community would be helpful so that libraries can effectively promote their services and programs in the community in order to reach more teens and their families.
 - The teen intern grantees indicated they needed the most assistance with the details and logistics of how to successfully work with teens on a daily basis, including understanding the amount of guidance teens need, especially initially.
 - **Data gathering:**

- For the purpose of measuring impact more precisely, it would have been helpful to be more specific when asking the number of hours teen interns worked.
 - **Capacity:** YALSA significantly scaled up the size of its mini grant program from 30 in 2011 to 70 in 2012. We underestimated the amount of additional work this involved.
 - **For Grantees:** many grantees reported that they needed to plan further ahead, including beginning their marketing sooner. More than one grantee reported that the funds allowed them to try a new program or service in their library, which was well received by the teens, so they were encouraged to try more new things. There were consistent reports from the teen intern grantees that they were impressed by the skills and professionalism of the teens and felt the need to provide more opportunities for teens to be engaged in the work of the library.

V. Financial Statement

Activity	Description	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
10 mini grants for Teen Read Week	At \$1,000 each	\$10,000	\$10,000
20 mini grants for summer reading programs	At \$1,000 each	\$20,000	\$20,000
Mobile application expansion	Create the Teen Book Finder app for other devices -- project delayed	\$5,000	N/A
40 grants for teen summer interns Training and materials for 70 grant winners	37 grants at \$1,000 each Training (webinars, conference calls, facilitator/mentor) Mailings of 70 resource packets	\$45,000	\$46,463
30 sets of Teens' Top Ten nominees and Teen Read Week materials	Materials for libraries, plus shipping costs	\$11,160	\$15,242
Media Outreach and marketing	Placement of print public service announcements in library and literacy focused publications Attendance at targeted conferences to promote program, including REFORMA	\$8,175	\$8,211
Office expenses	Supplies, etc.	\$1,000	\$419
Staffing	Oversight of all aspects of grant implementation	\$13,423	\$13,423
Grant Management	Processing grant applications, marketing efforts, training and support for grantees, etc.	\$11,126	\$11,126
TOTAL:		\$124,884	\$124,884

VI. Sustainability Plans

- **Resources:** many of the resources created during this project will live on and have already been made available to the library community and/or public, including:
 - Webinars
 - iPhone app
 - Downloadable pamphlet of recommended reading
- **Funding:** to further the program and YALSA's reach, there are options to explore for obtaining funds to support this effort, including:
 - Seeking foundation support
 - Seeking corporate support
 - Setting aside a portion of existing YALSA funds, such as interest from the William C. Morris Endowment, to help fund the effort

VII. Appendices

Appendix A

2012 Dollar General/YALSA Grantees by State

● - Grantees

