

Greater Victoria Public Library Youth Advisory Council

TEEN ZONE SURVEY REPORT 2011

By Allison Graham, GVPL Youth Advisory Council member & Kirsten Andersen, Teen Services Librarian
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"It's so great. I love it. It's nice to have an area that feels like "our own". I go directly there every time I'm in the library. I really don't know what I'd do if there wasn't one. Probably not come to the library as much."

Teen, Saanich Centennial Branch

Background & Introduction

The Teen Zone Survey project is a part of an overall review of Greater Victoria Public Library's youth spaces. The survey was designed by GVPL's Youth Advisory Council members. Taking place in the month of February, the survey was offered online and on paper, and was administered, promoted and collected by YAC members. YAC members did data entry on the project, and YAC member Allison Graham analyzed the data and prepared the summary that forms the body of this report.

Who did we hear from in this survey?

We received about 260 responses, and the data represented opinions on all ten GVPL branches. About 60% of replies came from girls, 40% from boys, and some people identified as other or gave no info. The largest age group of respondents was ages 13-15 (47%), then 16-18 year olds (37%), then 10-12 year olds (7%), who will be the next group of teens using the Teen Zones. Almost everyone who filled out a survey is a GVPL cardholder.

Findings

The Value & Use of Teen Zones

90% of those who answered the survey stated that they think having a Teen Zone in the library is useful. Reasons cited for having a Teen Zone:

- Books for teenagers do not fit in either the children's or adult's sections.
- Provides a good place to do homework as well as relax in a quiet environment.

8% considered the Teen Zone to not be useful. Reasons cited for not having a Teen Zone:

- Most teens are not interested in reading.
- The books in the Teen Zone are not age appropriate.

2% did not answer the question.

Too "teen" focused, we are not your generic boy crazy teenagers who only read Twilight. We read adult books, the classification of 'teen' is offensive." Teen, Bruce Hutchison Branch

Furniture

The average grade given to the chairs was a B. Most teens think they are pretty good for a library.

The main problem with the chairs is that there are not enough.

To improve the chairs teens recommended:

- Adding more colours
- Making them more cushiony
- Adding bean bag chairs and a couch
- Adding more chairs

The average grade for the desks was also a B.

Good things about the desks include:

- They are very sturdy
- They are large which is good for doing homework.

The main problem with the desks is that there are not enough.

Ways to improve the desks include:

- Adding more to desk
- Including both large and small desks
- Adding more colours
- Making the desks more wheelchair accessible

“It should be more colourful. It’s way too small to be a teen zone and there aren’t many books. Should be more appealing and the sign should be bigger and more attractive so that teens can see it and come to it more often. Posters of tv shows/ movies teens are attracted to (ie. Glee, the big bang theory etc). More attractive lounge chairs and nicer lighting.” Teen, Oak Bay Branch

Collections & Organization

To improve the overall organization of collections teens recommended:

- Having a consistent way of labeling books (i.e. not labeling some books by the first three letters of the authors name and other times just the first letter)
 - Getting rid of the spinning bookshelves
 - Potentially labeling books by title (opinion is divided on this)
 - Books in a series should all be kept together, even if the books are by different authors
- [Note: this is current practice]

Ambiance

For the most part teens said that the library is bright enough; although some think it is too bright and others say it is not bright enough.

Suggestions on how to improve the lighting include:

- More natural light from windows or skylights
- LEDs
- Lamps behind the chairs and at the desks
- Adding some creative light fixtures

The atmosphere in the Teen Zone is generally quite and calm although after school it can get a bit noisy. One factor contributing to the noise is that most Teen Zones are located next to the children’s area. Nevertheless teens find the Teen Zone to be a relaxing environment.

When asked where they thought the Teen Zone should be located those responding to the survey said:

- The Teen Zone should be moved away from the children’s area. This applies to Bruce Hutchinson, Central, Juan de Fuca, Nellie McClung, and Saanich Centennial.
- In a larger area. This applies to Central Saanich, Esquimalt, and Nellie McClung.
- Near the back of the library. This applies to Emily Carr.
- In the magazine area. This applies to Oak Bay.
- In a corner of the library. This applies to Saanich Centennial.

“Maybe make a bit more room because it can get kind of squishy.” Teen, Juan de Fuca Branch

Some overall suggestions on how to improve the Teen Zone:

- Add more colour and art (One suggestions was for teens to paint murals as a fundraiser.)
- Add more furniture
- Make the Teen Zone feel more homelike
- Put up signs that make it clear the this is a teen zone (no children or adults using the tables and chairs)
- Have displays of the most popular books of the month
- Try to make the environment more relaxed in order to encourage authentic learning

Bathrooms & Other Amenities

The washrooms in the library received an average grade of B. Most teens said that the washrooms are clean and well kept for a public washroom. The most frequent complaint is that there is a lack of paper towels.

In order to improve the bathrooms teens suggested:

- More mirrors
- More stalls
- Having signs that clearly show where the washrooms are located
- Automatic doors which make it easier for people with disabilities
- Air fresheners
- Not having to get a key from the desk

Computer Access

Teens said that they usually are able to access a computer at the library.

To improve computer access:

- Make the sign in more straight forward
- Have a poster explaining how to sign in
- Add more computers
- Spread the computers around the library
- Have more internet access
- Add computers (with internet) to the Teen Zone
- Add Microsoft Word, Excel, and other programs
- Make sure all the computers have headphones and that people use them
- Have Wi-Fi and areas to plug-in laptops

Programs in the Library

The teens who had attended library programs said that they had really enjoyed them; however 60% had never been to a program or not been for many years.

The types of library programs teens would like include:

- Book clubs, especially themed ones

- Craft programs (pottery, beading, and knitting were some suggestions)
- More leadership and volunteer opportunities
- Discussion groups about current events
- Photography courses
- Writing workshops
- A library science or behind the scenes tour course
- Author readings
- Career and university planning
- An environmental group
- HTML or C++ programming workshops
- Reading buddies on more days of the week (many people are busy on Saturdays)
- A Scrabble club
- Competitions of some sort

In order to improve the advertising of library programs teens suggested:

- Putting notices in schools
- A Facebook page
- Putting a bulletin board in the Teen Zone with information about programs
- Placing ads in the newspaper
- Putting up ads on the bus
- Putting up signs at the entrance to the library that will catch people's attention
- Getting a community announcement ad on the CBC or other radio station
- Having an email list people can subscribe to that sends out information about programs once a month

Overall Satisfaction

Overall, teens said they are satisfied or mostly satisfied with the GVPL.

Summary

Some of the recommendations made by teens that appeared many times included adding more colour, more seating, and comfier seating. Most teens see the Teen Zone as a relaxing place, ideally away from the kids' areas, where they can find things of interest to them and socialize or do homework with other teens. People's opinions varied on how bright the Teen Zones should be, but pretty much everyone prefers natural light. Many teens mentioned they'd like it to be easier to spot their favourite series, and they'd like all the books in the series to be together in one place, not separated by hardcover or paperback format. Most people really don't like the paperback spinners! Some would prefer if books were labeled by their titles instead of their authors, and many people also suggested organizing the fiction by genre (romance, mystery, action, horror, etc.). Lots of people also mentioned they'd like to have internet access in the Teen Zones, or more computers in the library overall.

"I think it's important to have a teen zone. I would like a place where I can sit down and read and perhaps go to afterschool and work on homework with some friends. I also like the fact that all the books targeted towards teens are in the same section so they are easy to find." Teen, Nellie McClung Branch

What else do we know about how teens use the library?

How many teens hold active library cards at GVPL?

- About 6,900
- Teens are defined as being between the ages of 13 and 17. People aged 0-12 have children's cards and those aged 18 or more have adult cards.
- "Active" is defined as having an unexpired card as of March 1, 2011.

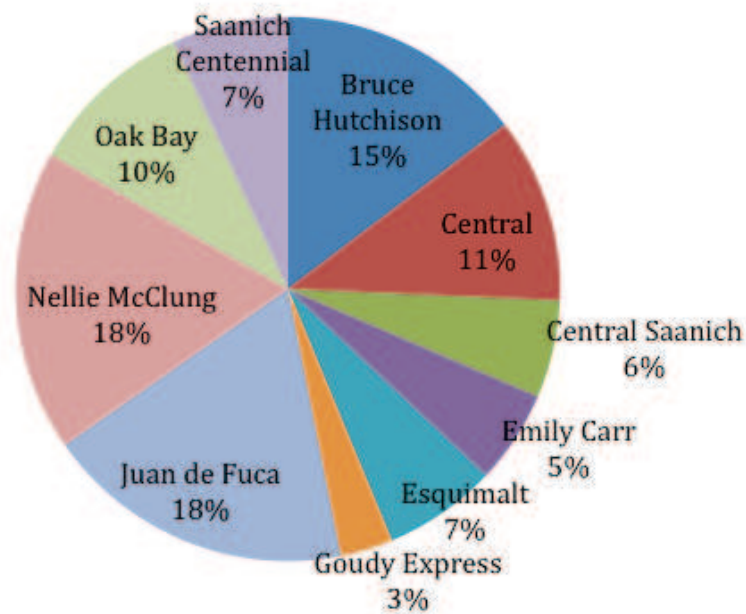
How many teens are there compared to the total number of library patrons with active accounts?

- Teens make up about 5.5% of the total number of library patrons with active accounts.

Which branches do they identify as their "home branch"?

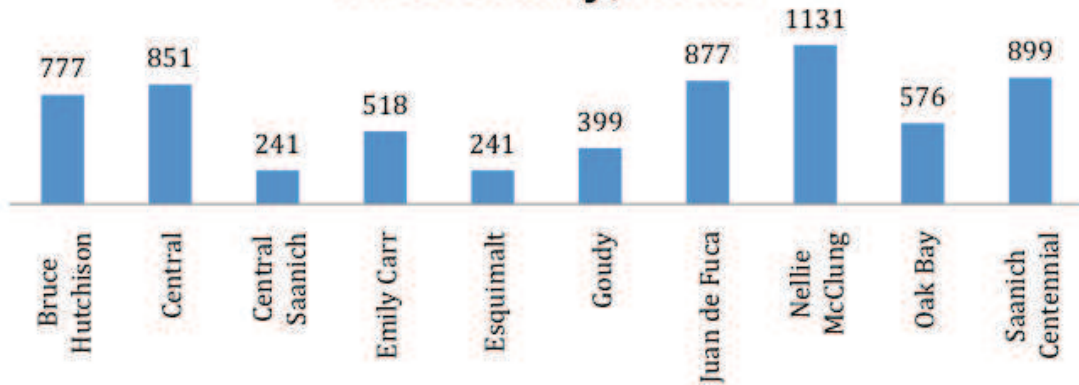
- The following pie graph shows the division of total active teen cardholders by branch of the GVPL system.

Active Teen Cardholders by Branch



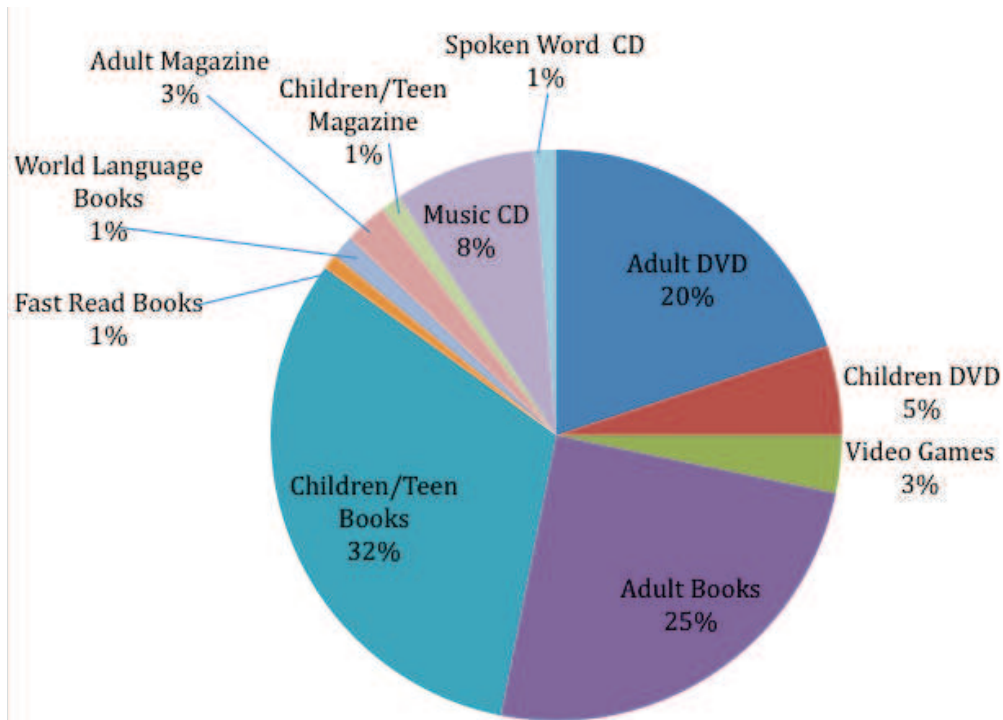
Where do teens borrow the most items?

Number of Items Borrowed by Teens in February, 2011



What kinds of items do teens check out?

In the month of February, teens checked out mostly books and DVDs:



What are teens borrowing?

How else do teens use the library?

255 teens participated in library programs during the survey month of February, 2011. Other kinds of library use by teens such as use of computers, use of the library's online resources from home, and use of drop-in spaces has not been measured.

"I think it is useful to have a teen zone because it is a place where teens can go to hang out, read, or study. Having safe, comfortable spaces for teens is crucial for many reasons. Some teens may not have a space at home where they can comfortably study, so having access to the library would be very beneficial for them. Teens may not want to go to the library and be in the adult section because they might feel uncomfortable, and they may not be able to find books at the reading level. The library is a place funded by all taxpayers so it should have a comfortable, welcoming space for everyone."

Teen, Nellie McClung Branch

Thank you to everyone for your valuable feedback to help us improve the Teen Zones!

Keep watching as we put your ideas into action in the short term, as well using your feedback in the long-term planning for updating and building library facilities.

Special thanks to:

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