

**Youth Opportunities Advisory Board**  
**Input for Library Master Plan**  
November 8, 2006

Library Staff (Lynn Reed, Liz Abbott) presented a brief overview of library services to the advisory board (12 members present), followed by a discussion of the following questions:

- From your perspective as a member of YOAB, prior to today's meeting, what would you have said the Boulder Public Library has to offer teens?
- How many of you are familiar with the teen space in the library? This is an area set aside for teens only, where they can snack, use computers, talk, listen to music and study. Open work/study areas are across the corridor from the room, along with a teen collection. Would YOAB consider this room a useful place for some teens to hang out after school and on weekends? Could the area be reinvented in a way that might draw more teens?
- Although the Library reaches some teens, there are many others whom we do not reach. Do you have any suggestions about the most effective ways to reach teens?
- The library has a unique facility of which the public is not always aware. Would teens consider access to a 200-seat auditorium for library-sponsored programming to be of interest?
- If there were a homework center in the library with computers, software, qualified and competent support and an atmosphere different from school, would that be seen as a valuable resource? We want an honest appraisal.
- Are there significant unmet needs within teen groups that the library might help address?

Responses from the group follow:

- Some members were familiar with several of the library services (beyond books), but most were unaware of the full range of library services. Items that were least likely to be known are the depth of the electronic collection, the writing groups, and the ability to use library space (including the auditorium) for meetings/performances/cultural events for or by teens. A small number were completely unfamiliar with what the library has to offer beyond books.
- Ways that the library is most commonly used by teens is for studying and personal reading material. Many use the bridge area for studying, socializing or tutoring, and find that to be a positive aspect of the library.
- Most were not familiar with the range of services that can be accessed remotely on the webpage.

Deficiencies for serving teens include:

- Inadequate space for group studying. The current space in teen room is too cramped and not set up well for group work. Reference table space requires that they be too quiet. Need something that allows talking and provides collaborative work space.
- Teen Space. The small room does not allow enough visibility to welcome people into the room (intimidating, exclusive), and the small size makes many feel uncomfortable entering when a group is already present. The physical setup does not welcome those who may not know how the room is used and doesn't allow for anonymity.
- Teen Space. More computers are needed in the teen area, or in other locations that could be dedicated to teen use, especially in the peak hours such as after school.

- Teen Space. Some thought the colors and décor to be too much of an attempt to be cool—resulting in it being too childish. Others commented positively on the furnishings. All thought it needed a more mature atmosphere to attract high school aged students.
- Regarding a homework center, YOAB members cited the resources available at BHS (O-Zone). They suggested coordinating with the high schools so that library space would be available in the hours after school libraries and resources close (generally by 4 pm). Space should emphasize access to computers, space for group work, and informed staff for assistance. The group thought that this might be a need well served by the library if done in coordination with schools.
- Regarding materials, staff should better promote existing Spanish language materials as well as enhance the amount of information available in Spanish to draw more Spanish-speaking teens; collection information on colleges should be better promoted and organized for teen use.

The single most mentioned issue was that YOAB members were unaware of many of the library services available. Suggestions for getting the word out to teens more effectively include:

- Informing teachers, and having them tell students about library services; educate teachers about library's electronic resources
- Checking with high administration offices to see if informational posters could be placed in school building
- Working with school media specialists to pass the word on services
- Listserv communications (or other electronic means)

Overall, YOAB felt the library was on the right track with serving teens.