

SELF PACED LEARNING KIT



Young People & Libraries

Compiled by: Garner Clancey - September 2007

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Acknowledgements

In 2004, Garner Clancey, Sally Doran and Michael Huggett developed a self-paced learning package for shopping centre security guards. This package was designed to partially address the lack of information developed specifically for shopping centre security personnel on dealing with young people. This original package has proven to be quite popular, receiving many thousands of hits on the Youth Action and Policy Association's website. In light of this success and the growing challenges for other professional groups in dealing with young people, it was decided that a series of similar packages would be developed for librarians, rangers (and similar local government regulatory personnel) and pool attendants. These specific sites / professions were selected based on feedback received that these were growing sites of conflict between young people and the associated personnel.

In developing these new self-paced learning packages, material from the original package has been coupled with new sections and updated information. Consequently, the original authors need to be acknowledged for their contribution and willingness to allow the original material to be re-worked. Furthermore, Pota Hatzopoulos contributed to the new cultural diversity section and Emma Farag contributed to the new section on managing intoxication. Special thanks also goes to Mylee Joseph (Consultant, State Library of New South Wales) for her considerable assistance with organising a focus group with library staff from western Sydney and providing relevant contemporary information about libraries. Thank you also to those librarians attending the focus group for this project and for those staff from across NSW who contributed their views and ideas via email.

Caveats

Any information contained in this package is provided to assist practitioners in their work. No responsibility is accepted by the authors for actions arising from dealing with young people (or other patrons / clients) based on any information contained within this document. Furthermore, the information pertaining to legislation was current at the time of writing. Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure its accuracy, the information contained in this report is intended to be used as a general guide only and should not be interpreted or taken as being specific advice, legal or otherwise. The reader should seek professional advice of a suitably qualified practitioner before relying upon any of the information contained herein. This article and the opinions contained in it represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Youth Action and Policy Association.

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The Youth Action & Policy Association NSW (YAPA) is the peak community group working in the interests of young people and youth services in NSW. YAPA strives to achieve social justice for young people, including the appropriate provision of services for young people.

The role of YAPA is to:

- * Monitor and respond to government policies and proposals affecting young people
- * Promote and advocate on issues affecting young people and youth services
- * Bring young people and youth workers together to act on issues affecting them
- * Work to raise a positive profile of young people in the media and in the community
- * Provide training, forums and conferences to young people and youth workers
- * Provide information and referral
- * Produce a range of resources, publications and newsletters.

What is a self-paced learning package?

A self-paced learning package contains all of the necessary information to help you learn more about the topic (in this case the topic is young people). By reading and working your way through the package, you can take your own time and go back to sections if problems arise in your work place that relate to the information provided. You do not necessarily have to attend face-to-face training, but it may be provided.

Why a self-paced learning package?

It is often difficult to get librarians and library staff released from work to attend training. While training is necessary, it can be expensive. A self-paced learning package like this one can be completed in your own time, during quiet shifts or discussed as part of regular meetings. By providing information in a self-paced learning package, we can be confident that many more people get to access this information.

What are the limitations of a self-paced learning package?

A self-paced learning package is only one way to enhance skills, knowledge and attitudes of library personnel. Attendance at training and quality supervision are still important in providing opportunities to learn and grow. Getting all personnel to complete packages can be a problem, especially for those who do not like to read or for whom English is a second language.

Why should library personnel read this package?

Young people often use libraries. Sometimes their presence is unwanted by other library patrons or personnel. In dealing with young people, library personnel can get into conflict or experience problems. This might be because of how they have responded or it might be because of the young person involved. Whatever the reason, as adults and as representatives of the library, it is your responsibility to act in a lawful and appropriate way. Having skills and knowledge to deal effectively with young people will reduce the tension and conflict experienced, improve job satisfaction and improve the harmony within (and around) the library.

How do I use this package?

Each section has been written to provide a simple summary of the key issues and information. Following this summary, there will be a number of exercises for you to consider. Complete the exercises before moving to the next section.

Some exercises require you to talk with your colleagues, to talk with young people in your library, gather some information from your supervisor or from the Internet. You might not be able to complete all of the exercises, but you should try your best.

What if I am having problems?

If you are having problems, you should speak with your supervisor, work colleagues or contact someone listed in the back of the package who might be able to help. Answers to all of your questions might not be able to be provided, but help and support can be found.

Common Scenarios – Young People and Libraries

Libraries are increasingly places where young people congregate. Increased school retention, diminishing public space and longer working hours of parents are some of the potential reasons why libraries are attracting more and more young people, and will continue to be popular with young people.

While it is pleasing that libraries are sites where young people feel safe, there have been some challenges associated with large numbers of young people utilising library facilities in some locations. Library staff have not necessarily received any specific training in dealing with young people; other library patrons might feel uncomfortable with large groups of young people congregating outside the library entrance; and policies and procedures covering behaviour standards might not specifically deal with the challenges posed by young people. These are potentially just some of the situations that will contribute to conflict or tension between library staff, young people and other patrons.

More specifically, library personnel supplied the following examples of situations that can cause problems.

Scenario 1: *Large groups of young people gather on the steps just outside the library, or in the foyer or car park areas. They are often involved in under age smoking and usually loud and disruptive behaviour. They also try to bring food and drink into the library, despite adequate signage explaining that this is not permitted. Staff that approach them to explain the rules regarding no consumption of food on the premises are then met with a barrage of abuse, insults and swearing. The noise levels inside the library, especially in the reference area where they tend to congregate, are disruptive to other library users and can intimidate some of the elderly patrons.*

Scenario 2: *Young people deface library property - such as graffiti in the library public toilets or damage to IT equipment or furnishings, vandalising or stealing the library public phone or defacing actual library signs. We have often had cases where they leave offensive drawings or bad language scribbled on walls or tables or have removed our official library signs and replaced them with their own hand drawn rude images or slogans. This sort of vandalism is expensive to constantly repair and does not help with making the library attractive to other patrons.*

Scenario 3: *Perhaps the most stressful desk to work on is the Technology desk at our new library. At this service point, the staff on duty are required to handle the booking system for our network of 32 public computers. Other computers are available in the reference section for research or electronic data base searches, study purposes etc. However, the Technology room computers are very heavily used by large groups of teens who often come in with a group of their friends; problems occur when staff ask them to vacate a computer because their allocated time slot has expired or when they explain that we booked up and cannot offer a spot until a later time. The staff are verbally abused with large beefy teens refusing to move or vacate a spot to let the next patron have their turn.*

Scenario 4: *Students who desperately need HSC material and have left their library card at home sometimes resort to hiding the item and trying to smuggle it out of the library. The same happens with music CDs.*

Scenario 5: *Individuals who study in a particular study booth regularly tend to start thinking that it is their very own booth and no one else is permitted there.*

Scenario 6: *Difficulties arise sometimes with young people who are banned from the library for a misdemeanour and are policed by our security guard or other staff who feel strongly about enforcing the ban. Sometimes the young people think they have been incorrectly targeted by staff (i.e. it wasn't them who was banned, the staff single them out for unfair attention etc.). There are sometimes angry 13-15 year olds. I personally have dealt with this by getting kids to write out what they feel is unfair and what has transpired. This has worked in the past to defuse the anger and calm the situation down. Our security guards have been very good in their dealings with kids in general but sometimes the testosterone gets in the way!*

Scenario 7: *Groups of teenagers in the library divide along “ethno-specific” lines and can turn the library space into a bit of a “turf war”. Some library staff feel that some groups of young people don’t respect them because they’re women (the majority of library staff are women over 35 years of age).*

Clearly, in many of these situations there are no simple answers. In most situations, the required responses will take commitment and perseverance. Maintaining consistent boundaries, reinforcing the rules, building relationships with the young people and engaging key personnel from council, the youth sector and other agencies might all contribute to an improved situation. These measures will take time and will never be universally successful 100% of the time. By putting these measures in place and through constant review, progress can be made.

The following comments provided by a library staff member from a south-western Sydney library demonstrates the benefits of even some simple relationship building with young people:

“We have had quite a lot of teenagers challenging us at various times over recent years. We have found that a non-confrontational response is more successful generally. Librarians should be getting to know the customers, making contact with them whenever they come into the library, developing a relationship of mutual trust. If we hide behind our desks, books & systems and don't actually "meet and greet" people, then we are inviting the potential for hostility from groups of teens particularly. I have personally found it very helpful to go up to teens and say "g'day" and ask if I can help them find anything. A friendly helpful, non-stereotyping librarian will get a better relationship going with the kids than will a "rule-enforcer".

Once a relationship is developed, the kids will know how to behave appropriately, without us having to tell them.

At the end of the day, it is great that the kids come to the library – they are our customers!”

The following was supplied by Robyn Tonks (Library Manager) from Singleton Council. Robyn's thoughts on how to respond to young people and how to create a welcoming but controlled environment encapsulate much of what will be expanded upon in this resource.

Robyn's suggestions:

- Ensuring staff are clear on my expectation that all customers are made to feel welcome when they visit (even if they may have misbehaved in the past) and we react only to their present behaviour.
- Talking to the staff about their interactions with teens, what's appropriate and what isn't; what works, what doesn't. Encouraging staff to recognise the rewards of kids valuing the library and how it can make a difference in their life.
- Trying to build relationships with young people.
- Putting policies in place; customers are made aware of them and they are enforced – no empty threats, consistent follow through. Making sure they get the message that misbehaviour won't be tolerated.
- Attempting to ensure they feel welcome and know that we want them to enjoy the library, but also that they must respect the other users and the library itself.
- Treating the use of the computers as a privilege available to all, but if the privilege is abused it is withdrawn, permanently. This applies to everyone, not just young people and applies to any abuse whether major or minor. They love the computers and don't want to lose the privilege. We only had to withdraw the privilege for a few young people and word soon got around that we were serious. It is worth noting that the second one to be banned remained an ardent library lover, knew he had done the wrong thing and was overheard to tell other young people this.
- Calling the police immediately if there is any trouble, like refusing to leave, threatening behaviour or fights.
- Escalating bans to the library (not just computers) – can start as small as sent out for the day as a cooling off period but are for longer periods if the misbehaviour is more serious. A memo is attached to their record and a 2nd ban no matter how minor the offence is for a longer period. It increases significantly with each ban – never had occasion to have to test this as they tend to get the message.

Many of the strategies highlighted in the above two examples will be considered in detail in this document. It is hoped that by exploring these strategies, library staff will feel more confident and capable in dealing with problems as they arise and will seek to building lasting relationships that help to promote an engaging and enjoyable library space.

Section 1: Law, Policies and Rules

The behaviour of library patrons and staff will be guided by relevant legislation and policies and procedures. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the law, policies and rules governing behaviour in libraries before responding to inappropriate behaviour.

Library Regulation 2005

The major legislative guidance regarding how to manage behaviour in public libraries is derived from the *Library Regulation 2005 (NSW)*. These regulations cover various aspects of library functions, including the use of libraries and library materials. Part 3 of the *Library Regulation Act 2005* is copied below.

Library Regulation 2005

Part 3 Use of libraries and library material

9 Certain things must not be taken into a reading room

A person entering any library with any umbrella, bag, case or package, or any photographic or other equipment, must not take it beyond any vestibule of a library except with the consent of the governing body for the library.

Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

10 Reproduction of library material

(1) The governing body of a library may give notice to users of the library that certain library material of the library is unsuitable for reproduction.

(2) A person must not photograph, photocopy, trace or otherwise reproduce (whether by electronic or digital reproduction) any such library material. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

Note. See the [Copyright Act 1968](#) of the Commonwealth for other restrictions on making copies of **works** (as defined in that Act).

11 Damaging library material

(1) A person must not write in or on or mark or cause any damage to any library material of any library. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

(2) For the purposes of this clause, **damaging** library material includes tearing or otherwise mutilating or turning down or folding any leaf, sheet, page or plate of any library material.

12 Deliberate misplacing or hiding of library material

A person must not wilfully misplace or hide any library material, or any record of the library material, of any library. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

13 Noise

A person must not by speech or otherwise make any more noise in any library

than is reasonably necessary for the use of the library. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

14 Proper use of a library

A person must not, without the consent of the governing body for the library, use any library for any other purpose than reading, consulting or borrowing the library material of the library or using any other library service or information service. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

15 Eating and drinking prohibited

A person must not eat or drink in any library otherwise than on those parts of the premises set aside for the purpose by the governing body for the library. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

16 Animals prohibited

(1) A person must not take any animal into any library or leave any animal in such a library unless the person has the consent of the governing body for the library. Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

(2) This clause does not prohibit a person with a disability from taking an assistance animal into a library.

(3) In this clause:

assistance animal means an animal referred to in section 9 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 of the Commonwealth.

disability has the same meaning as it has in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 of the Commonwealth.

17 Library users may be directed to leave

(1) A library staff member may direct any person to leave the library, and not to re-enter the library for such period as the staff member directs, if the staff member is of the opinion that:

(a) the person has contravened any provision of this Part, or

(b) the person's condition, conduct, dress or manner is likely to give offence to any person in the library or to interfere with any other person's use of the library.

(2) A person to whom such a direction is given must not fail to comply with the direction.

Maximum penalty: 2 penalty units.

(3) The period for which a person may be excluded from the library by such a direction must not exceed the maximum period determined by the governing body of the library.

By way of clarification, at this time of writing, a penalty unit is \$110 in NSW. This means that fines of \$220 can be issued for offences arising from breaches of the above legislative guidelines.

Question: How well do you believe staff and young patrons of the library understand these guidelines? Ponder this question. Speak to some staff and young people to ascertain their understanding of these guidelines.

If these guidelines are poorly understood, then there is some chance that inappropriate behaviour will go unchecked.

Conditions of Entry

Libraries will develop their own conditions of entry or rules building on the guidelines provided by the *Library Regulation 2005*. By developing conditions of entry or clear rules, behaviour standards in libraries can be clearly articulated. By clearly displaying the conditions of entry and educating young people about these rules, the opportunities for excuse making are minimised. For example, in the absence of clearly documented and displayed rules, it is easy for a (young) patron to say that they didn't know it was wrong to bring food or drink into the library.

There are many examples from local libraries of conditions of entry being developed and enforced. The following information is from the Upper Hunter Regional Libraries. It provides an example of attempts to understand the nature of the patrons visiting their libraries, but to also spell out clearly what is deemed acceptable behaviour.

Young Persons in the Library Policy

Introduction

Young persons are core clients of public libraries. Over 31% of Upper Hunter's registered library users are under the age of 18. The contemporary public library offers a wide variety of services to young persons and as these services evolve, it is important to convey clear and consistent messages about the role and scope of public libraries in young persons' lives. This policy is based on the *Children's policy guidelines for NSW Public Libraries*, developed by the Library Council of NSW to encourage uniformity and consistency in policy formation across NSW public libraries.

Welcome Statement

Library staff welcome all young persons to all Branches of the Upper Hunter Regional Library, and are happy to assist them in the use of resources and services. Our Mission is to provide a readily available and accessible Library Service to meet the recreation and information needs of the residents of the Upper Hunter. To achieve this aim, staff strive to create an atmosphere that is comfortable and enjoyable for all customers. We are committed to serving the information and recreation needs of young persons in the Upper Hunter. Young persons are core public library clients in their own right, and are

potentially the future adult users of public libraries. Therefore it is important that the messages conveyed to young users are positive and welcoming. Accordingly, a summary of this policy will be distributed to all young persons and their parents / guardians when they register as library members together with a copy of the following Charter. The summary will begin with a statement making it clear that young people are welcome in the Library.

Charter of Young Persons in the Library

Young persons in the Library have the right to:

- Intellectual freedom
- Equal access to the full range of services and materials.
- A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
- Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
- A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
- Staff trained and knowledgeable in youth and children's services.
- Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
- An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the council and community to make people aware of the goals of youth and children's services.
- Library policies written to include the needs of the child. Upper Hunter Regional Library's services to young persons include:
- Comprehensive lending and reference collections including books, music CD's, CD ROMs, videos and magazines.
- Computer services - Internet access including e-mail and chat lines, computer games, word processing and printing
- Pre-school story times.
- Holiday activities and story times, catering for a wide range of ages and interests.
- Special events and performances.
- Assistance from staff in accessing collections and information.
- Homework help
- Space for study

Unattended Young Persons

The Library does not provide childcare. Libraries are not a substitute for childcare agencies, and any parent / guardian who uses libraries as such is putting their child at risk. Libraries do not have the facilities or appropriate licences to attend to young persons who are sick, injured or hungry. Council

ensures that the Library is safe for young persons from an occupational health and safety point of view, and the library staff take reasonable care to ensure that the Library is safe and welcoming for all library users. Responsibility for a young person's use of the Library, however, lies with parents / carers at all times. Unsupervised young persons can be at risk in any public place, including public libraries. Except for specified activities, Library staff do not supervise young persons in the Library, so there is a risk that unattended young persons may leave the library at any time, hurt themselves, or be approached by strangers. Libraries are busy public places, open to all, and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to young persons. Young children left alone in a library can become distressed, bored or disruptive. Library users, including young people, who disturb other library users, may be removed from the library under the *Library Act 1939*. Any young person left unattended in a public library may be classed as a child or young person at risk of harm under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, s23, and subsequently may be reported as such to the Department of Community Services under s24 or s27 of the Act. Parents who leave a child unattended in a public library are exposing their child to potential harm, and may themselves be committing an offence under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, s228.

Disruptive Behaviour in the Library

Library staff are committed to ensure all customers enjoy a productive and rewarding experience. Customers are expected to take responsibility for the behaviour of themselves and any young person they bring into the library. In the case of loud / bad language or suspected misuse of library equipment, staff will give two warnings. If the behaviour continues, the offender(s), whether adult or young person, will be asked to leave the library. In the case of vandalism, consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs, sexual misconduct, offenders will be asked to leave the library immediately. Staff will attempt to establish the identity of the offenders, and the Library Manager and the police are to be informed of the incident. It may be necessary to take further action depending on the nature and severity of the incident. (e.g. extensive damage to Council property and resources). To avoid litigation, at no time will staff make physical contact, gently or otherwise, to attempt to remove an offender from the library. If an offender refuses to leave when asked, the police will be called immediately.

These detailed guidelines provide clear direction for library staff and patrons. While these clear guidelines exist (and are no doubt replicated in all libraries), the critical question is whether young people are familiar with the relevant rules.

Individual Exercise: Many public and semi-public spaces have difficulties communicating behavioural standards to potential patrons / users. Your exercise is to review how behavioural standards are communicated in locations like train stations, shopping centres and parks. What methods are adopted to illustrate what behaviour is acceptable / unacceptable and what the consequences will be for inappropriate behaviour?

Now consider how a person entering your library will learn about what is acceptable behaviour – what are the cues regarding behaviour as someone approaches and then enters the library?

Tips and Hints

In spending some time observing how different locations attempt to communicate to patrons / users what behaviour is acceptable, look out for signage. Most locations will have clearly displayed signs advising of the conditions of entry. The best signs will use symbols to communicate to patrons / users and will be prominently displayed.

The benefit of good, clear signage is that it can be used by staff when reinforcing the rules. For example, a staff member can point to the sign that says “No Eating or Drinking in the Library” to support their intervention with a young person carrying a drink in the library. This helps to reinforce the rule without it becoming personal. In the absence of clearly communicated rules, it will be easy for a patron / user to infer that they’ve been singled out.

Signs are clearly a common way of communicating what is expected in a particular location. However, too many signs can reduce their effectiveness and punitive or negatively stated messages can contribute to unpleasant atmosphere. Where possible, try to use signs that provide positive messages.

Some shopping centres have taken to developing very small wallet cards with their rules and conditions of entry. These cards can be routinely handed out and used in education sessions with school students, as a means of providing opportunities to learn what is acceptable behaviour in a shopping centre. Similar approaches could be adopted by libraries.

Involving groups of young people periodically to review library rules can be a way of building some insight into why rules exist and the difficulties of managing behaviour of diverse user groups. This might also build a sense of ownership, which might contribute to forms of self-policing, where young people help their friends to monitor their behaviour.

Consistency and Rehearsal

Locations where rules are consistently applied and where staff regularly rehearse how they will respond to particular behaviours are more likely to have fewer problems. Patrons quickly learn the rules and quickly learn that they cannot divide and conquer the staff. In locations where staff haphazardly apply the rules, it is likely that some staff will be singled out and tested. Patrons will also claim that they were previously allowed to do certain things, creating a difficulty for the staff member trying to enforce the rules.

Consequently, it is important for staff teams to periodically review how they handled previous situations and to rehearse responses to common scenarios. By doing this, staff teams learn about how individual members respond and develop consistent practices. Through rehearsal, responses become instinctive, which demonstrates a level of confidence within and across staff teams.

Team Exercise: In staff meetings, consider the following scenarios and discuss how team members would individually respond. Review the level of consistency across team members and reflect on the adequacy of existing policies and procedures to deal with these scenarios.

Scenario: *A young male comes into the library looking somewhat frightened. He finds a spot close to staff and watches the entrance. A group of young males come into the library and head straight to the frightened young male. They take adjoining seats and start a discussion in low voices. How should staff respond?*

Scenario: *A group of students gather just outside the entrance of the library after school. They are regular users of the library and frequently gather outside after school. They partially block the entrance to the library and are boisterous. How should staff respond?*

Scenario: *A staff member approaches a young person and asks them to turn their headphones down, as the noise is disturbing other patrons. The young person says that another staff member always allows them to use the headphones in the same way and it has never been a problem before. The staff member re-states the request and walks away. The young person does not alter their behaviour. How should staff respond?*

Scenario: *Two groups of young people are in the library. It is clear that there is some hostility between the two groups. A staff member occasionally over-hears various racial slurs being exchanged between the two groups. The staff member pretends not to hear them. The taunts increase in the course of an hour, to the point where two protagonists from the groups are now confronting each other. How should staff respond?*

The purpose of these scenarios is to stimulate discussion amongst team members about how best to respond. Drawing out differences across team members is important, because the way that each staff member responds and deals with inappropriate behaviour has consequences for other team members. A staff

member who is passive invariably places pressure on other team members to intervene. Conversely, an authoritarian staff member might create tension that causes difficulties for other team members. Understanding how team members respond and discussing preferred approaches will help prepare staff to address issues as they arise.

Youth Crime and the Law

In some circumstances, police will be called to libraries to deal with allegations of criminal activity. The following provides very basic information about the relevant legislation in NSW covering what happens to a young person arrested for an offence.

Young Offenders Act 1997

The *Young Offenders Act* (YOA) provides police with four options when considering how to deal with a young person (10-18 years old) who breaks the law. The options available are briefly described below:

- **Warning** – a warning will be used in less serious (or summary offences). The warning is issued on the spot and details of the young person are recorded and placed into the police computer database. Warnings are typically given for offensive behaviour, offensive language, riding bicycle without a helmet and riding on public transport without a ticket.
- **Caution** – a caution is a more serious intervention. A caution can only happen if the young person admits guilt in the presence of a parent, an adult nominated by a parent, a lawyer, or if the young person is over 16 years, in the presence of an adult that they select. A caution is then delivered by a police officer at the police station in the presence of the young person and his / her parents or guardian. The caution could take up to an hour and is designed to encourage the young person to take responsibility for their offending and to clearly alert them to the fact that further offending will be dealt with more seriously. A record is made on the police database of the caution. A criminal record does not result from a caution. Cautions are often delivered for stealing, common assault, break and enter and malicious damage (i.e. vandalism).
- **Youth Justice Conference** – this brings the victims, the young offender and his / her parents together to discuss the crime. The young person will be required to explain their actions and the victim has a chance to inform the young person how the offence has affected them. Together, the young person and the victim decide how the damage can be repaired, and this will generally involve one or a combination of the following: an apology, financial reparation, community work, direct reparation of the damage (e.g. fix the damage to the shed that the young person damaged) or entry into a program designed to stop further offending. A conference will be conducted for similar offences as a caution, but often the young person will have offended previously or the offence had a greater impact on the victim. The young person must have previously admitted guilt in the presence of an acceptable adult (i.e. lawyer, parent or adult nominated by parent) to be eligible for a youth justice conference or caution.

- **Court** – court is the last option for young people who have offended. Police have no option but to send a young person to court if they do not admit guilt or if they have committed a very serious offence (e.g. sexual offences, drug supply or trafficking, armed robbery, offences resulting in death). Courts can impose periods of detention, fines, etc. as an outcome.

If you wish to learn more about the YOA, it is recommended that you contact the local police Youth Liaison Officer. These officers have specialist knowledge of the YOA and will be able to provide further explanation.

Summary

Understanding the relevant laws, powers and rules associated with entry and behaviour in a library will be a critical backdrop to all responses of staff to inappropriate behaviour by (young) patrons. The *Library Regulation 2005* outlines the rules associated with eating and drinking, noise, damage to property the proper use of library equipment and asking people to leave. Local conditions of entry and rules build on this legislative base and will frequently cover key aspects of library behaviour.

Ensuring that your library clearly communicates these rules via relevant signage and other means will be helpful in minimising the excuses for inappropriate behaviour. By reviewing how other venues establish clear guidance about acceptable behaviour, it is possible to review the adequacy of existing procedures in your library.

Library staff who are well versed in relevant rules and who are well drilled in responding to common problems will be in a good position to tackle inappropriate behaviour as it arises. Failure to understand the different tactics adopted by other staff members will negatively impact on the way that the library environment is perceived and the way that incidents are managed.

The next section provides a brief overview of some key characteristics of the physical library environment and observation practices in minimising potential problems.

Section 2: Design, Layout and Observation

It is well known that building design significantly impacts on behaviour. In the context of crime, for example, there is increasing recognition of the benefits of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). By removing hiding spots for offenders, increasing lighting, improving sightlines and visual surveillance and increasing legitimate activity in particular areas, crime can be prevented.

Many libraries will have been built many years ago and long before contemporary needs existed. While this might limit how much can be done in relation to the overall library design, it is still useful to consider the impact of the design, layout and image of the library on behaviour. Coupled with active observation, improved library layout can reduce inappropriate behaviour in a library.

Library Design and Layout

Without going into significant detail, this section will simply raise some issues regarding library design and layout, as it relates to behaviour. By posing some simple questions and highlighting some possible areas of review, improvements might be made to the physical layout of the library.

Cleanliness

Take a mental walk through your library. Start at the entrance and move through all levels and rooms. In this mental tour, review the cleanliness of the facility. Are books lying around? Does the library look less clean and tidy at any particular times during the day? Are there areas that are more prone to becoming untidy than others? Are there procedures for ensuring that all areas are regularly tidied?

By answering these questions, you will have started to consider an important aspect of how the library environment affects behaviour. Areas that are perceived to be untidy, dirty or unclean will often promote further degradation. Areas where graffiti goes unchecked often attract more graffiti; vacant buildings that are damaged and not repaired will often attract further damage; parks that are not well attended will often be poorly treated by users. The same logic applies to library facilities. This means that chairs should be routinely placed under tables, rubbish routinely removed, papers periodically re-stacked, damage rapidly repaired (including the rapid removal of any graffiti) and floors and surfaces frequently cleaned.

Many libraries will have clear procedures for the ongoing maintenance and tidying of all library facilities. If you believe that this is not true of your library, then you should raise this with management.

Welcoming Atmosphere

Re-start your mental tour of your library. Is it a welcoming place to enter? How do you feel walking into the library? What do you see when you first enter and how does this affect your experience of the library?

The initial impression of the library will be formed as you approach the building and upon entering. The mood and atmosphere of the library will be quickly ascertained from visual and aural cues. Libraries that present as organised and soothing places will encourage similar behaviour. Libraries with harsh lighting and hard surfaces will be uninviting.

The images dotted around libraries will also project particular cues to patrons. Are there images representing cultural diversity? Are signs written in different community languages? Are there images that promote happiness and tranquility? While these things might seem unimportant, try to reflect on locations where you feel unwelcome or unwanted and reflect on how it impacted on your behaviour. By ensuring that the posters, paintings and images around the library promote inclusiveness, diversity, well-being, etc., patrons will feel more comfortable.

Wayfinding

By improving wayfinding through a library, staff time absorbed by location enquiries can be reduced, allowing more time to spent interacting with patrons or undertaking other tasks. Furthermore, good wayfinding will also help in identifying and demarcating areas. Cues that mark the purpose of a particular section of the library will help promote appropriate behaviour in that area. Quiet study areas, children's books, information technology and reference sections will generally be clearly distinguishable. This demarcation between different areas can help to promote particular behaviour.

Problem "Hot Spots"

In many facilities, problems will cluster in particular areas or sections. Again utilising the crime example, it is likely that assaults will often be clustered around licensed premises. By understanding this clustering of problems, we can identify "hot spots".

Hot spots can occur in all sorts of facilities. By analyzing the location of incidents or recurring problems, it is possible to identify issues requiring attention. In the context of a library, if it is known that a group study area poses problems after 3pm, then a strategy might be to dismantle the group study area at 2pm daily. This minor modification (i.e. moving desks) might prevent ongoing problems. Conversely, staff deployment and rostering practices might accommodate the rise and fall of such problems. This could mean that extra staff are deployed to be "on the floor" at these times.

Individual Exercise: Identifying problem hot spots can help in considering how to minimise inappropriate behaviour. Over a fortnight, reflect on where problems seem to most commonly arise. Note these locations and consider how the design and layout of these areas have contributed to the identified problems.

Sightlines and Visibility

The ability for staff to see and to be seen will impact on behaviour. If, due to the layout of the library, most staff are hidden in back offices, then potential surveillance will be reduced. Similarly, if book shelves obscure sightlines, then it is more likely that inappropriate behaviour will occur in these visually isolated locations.

By again undertaking a mental tour of your library, you will be able to identify areas with poor surveillance and visibility. Choosing the purpose of these areas will be important, as you don't want to have patrons that pose higher risk to the good order of the library located in these areas. Simple techniques can be utilised to improve visibility, including installation of mirrors, reducing the height of shelves, removing unnecessary clutter, placing staff areas in strategic locations, slightly elevating staffing areas, using glass to demarcate office areas and ensuring that rows of shelves are oriented to enable maximum surveillance.

Demarcation of Purpose

Sometimes the demarcation of purpose is quite apparent, while at other times it will be somewhat ambiguous. Similarly, the relationship between different sections of the library might be contributing to problems. Having an Internet access area next to publications mostly enjoyed by older patrons might be a recipe for tension, especially if the Internet area is mostly utilised by young patrons. By trying to establish clear demarcation between areas with specific purposes, contests over space by patrons can be reduced.

These are just some of the considerations that might be relevant to the design and layout of your library. Local design experts should be consulted if you are embarking on the re-design or re-development of a library facility. By considering and planning for considerations such as those identified, potential problems can be alleviated or minimised.

Group Exercise: In situations where the design and layout is considered especially problematic, it might be beneficial to undertake an audit of the library. By including patrons that represent the different user groups, it is possible to review how people feel coming into the library, how easy they find it to navigate around the library, where they feel that they are under surveillance and not under surveillance, whether they believe the library to be well maintained and what they would recommend in relation to improvements. An exercise of this nature might reveal a great deal about strengths and weaknesses of the existing library layout.

The following “checklist” provides some prompts for reviewing the adequacy of existing layout and design issues. As a team, you might conduct a review of the library considering these issues.

Issues	Considerations	Assessment / Comments
Cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the library clean and well maintained? Are damages repaired rapidly? Is graffiti removed rapidly? 	
Atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance welcoming? Is the library well furnished? Are furnishings well maintained? Are posters / images representative of local communities? 	
Way-finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it easy to navigate around the library? Are staff areas clearly marked? 	
Problem “hot spots”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there spots where problems are concentrated? Are staff located near to “hot spots” 	
Sightlines and visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there good visibility into and through the library? Are staff desks raised slightly and / or located to promote visibility? 	
Demarcation of Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there clear demarcation between special purpose areas? Are there problems associated with special purpose areas being co-located? 	

Observation and Surveillance

Observation of patrons is an important tool in preventing conflict and problems. In many situations, patrons who feel that they are under observation by either staff or other patrons will modify their behaviour accordingly. In some circumstances, however, it should be noted that the presence of an audience will promote inappropriate behaviour. For example, if a young person feels that they are being watched unnecessarily or selectively, then overt observation might provoke a response. By striking an effective balance between excessive and minimal surveillance, behaviour can be positively influenced.

Prevention

A key goal of observation is to prevent problems before they arise. You will not be able to prevent all problems before they happen simply through observation, but by being on the look out you can help prevent accidents, disagreements and damage.

One of the goals of someone wanting to cause problems in a library will be to remain invisible. Not being seen or noticed provides cover. Wearing loud clothing or bringing attention to yourself through your behaviour is not very smart if you intend to commit a crime or to cause trouble. As a librarian, simply saying hello to as many people as you can, might mean that someone feels noticed. For young people not intending to get up to any mischief, they will feel included and accepted in the centre if you say hello and engage in friendly conversation.

Surveillance

Through observation, surveillance is maintained. Your observation and communication with other staff will enable concerns to be identified and prevented.

There are many simple things that you can do to conduct active rather than passive surveillance. Active surveillance could include saying hello, engaging in conversation, offering assistance, being accessible and generally being seen as a helper. By actively engaging young people and other patrons, you can build a relationship. Rather than only speaking to young people when a problem arises, you can take control and initiate or start conversations. This will help you to gather useful information, develop a better understanding of the individual and establish a relationship that might prove very helpful when and if problems do arise.

Observation and Stereotyping

One of the potential problems with observation is stereotyping. Stereotyping generally means that you label all people because of the behaviour of a few. If you said that you were going to target all young people because you know they graffiti, then you would be stereotyping. It is true that some young people graffiti, but not all. If you said that you were going to keep an extra close eye on anyone in the library wearing black beanies, because you know that anyone wearing a black beanie is out to cause trouble, then you would be stereotyping. By doing this, it is

possible that many people will be unfairly targeted, while others will receive no attention.

Library staff can be victims of stereotypes. What do people generally think about library staff? How inaccurate are these views?

Stereotyping is sometimes a response to only remembering particular people. You remember having a disagreement with a young person, so therefore you form the opinion that young people cause problems. What about the many young people who come to the library and cause no problems whatsoever? It is easy to forget the good young people and easier to remember the minority who cause problems.

Stereotyping can cause problems. Some of these problems include:

- **Laws Against It** – Anti-discrimination laws mean that people can be treated unfairly because of the age, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, religion, etc. If you target people for “special attention” because of their race, then you are breaking anti-discrimination laws.
- **Missed Opportunities** – By making assumptions about someone, because of how they look or who they are, you might miss opportunities to establish a good working relationship with them.
- **“Self-fulfilling Prophecy”** – Basically, this is when you make an assumption about someone and it comes true because of how your assumption influences the way you behave toward them. If you are called stupid all of your life, you might start to believe it and begin to act stupid. No one expects any different, so why should you be anything other than stupid? If you label someone as a troublemaker because of the way they look or because of their age, you are likely to act differently toward them. You might watch them more than you would other people, you might be quick to punish them if they behave inappropriately and you might generally treat them differently. This will become a self-fulfilling prophecy – you will look for behaviours to confirm your original beliefs, which will often mean missing other good behaviours.

These are just some of the problems with stereotyping. Being aware of stereotypes and how they can affect your judgement will be important in your role.

Safety and Security Reminders

The following excerpt has been taken from **People Places: A Guide for Public Library Buildings in New South Wales (2005)** prepared by consultants Heather Nesbitt Planning in association with Bligh Voller Nield for the Library Council of NSW:

“An appropriate level of security is now required in all public libraries to ensure the safety of staff, users, the building and the collection. Electronic surveillance, although sometimes necessary, becomes intrusive and can affect the **friendliness** of the library. Good security can be designed into the library from the

outset through clear sightlines, good positioning of the circulation desk and the avoidance of blind spots. However, additional security measures such as surveillance cameras and distress alarms should

be considered where:

- Library is used for customer service activities such as rates payments or other uses involving the handling of money
- A lone staff person operates a facility

Libraries may suffer some vandalism and abuse, although probably less than other unattended public buildings. The buildings, fittings and contents of libraries are very valuable, and senseless vandalism will cause considerable expensive damage. To counter the possibility of vandalism, some precautions can be taken:

- Design the building so that there are no concealed corners with windows (particularly louvres or sliding windows) which can be broken or forced
- Provide night security lighting on a time-switch
- Provide alarms connected to any windows or doors that can be forced
- Locate in an area where there is good passive surveillance from adjoining land uses (eg residents, business owners) and passing pedestrian and vehicular traffic
- Reduce the amount of blank walls which are attractive for graffiti and / or use building materials which are difficult to graffiti”(page 58).

Summary

The design and layout of the library can contribute to, or discourage, unwanted behaviours. The cleanliness, the sightlines and visibility and the demarcation of special purpose areas are just some of the layout features that can contribute to particular behaviour. By attending to these features and improving surveillance / observation of patrons, problematic behaviour might be minimised.

Section 3: Building Rapport & Communicating with Young People

Building Rapport

Rapport simply means getting to know someone. If you say hello to a patron each time you see them, you will start to build a rapport. You will begin to learn more about them and to share things about yourself. Building a relationship this way with frequent patrons will make your work more enjoyable.

How can such a simple approach help? By gradually building a relationship with frequent patrons you will get a better understanding of them as individuals. By knowing a patron well, you will be able to spot if they are not themselves (stressed, angry, intoxicated), you will be able to fall back on this relationship if there are problems (“Come on Andrew; it is me Tony; I can see you’re pissed off, but let’s talk about it”), people will be more willing to provide you with information and you will generally make people feel more welcome in the library.

Building rapport with everyone visiting your library is impossible. Of the many thousands of people that will visit your library, many will visit infrequently. While this is true, there will be many who are regular visitors. There will be many young people who you can develop an understanding of, and with whom you can develop a relationship.

There is no mystery to building rapport or relationships. You will already have experience in building rapport, through your social and work lives. While you will have experience in this area, the following are some tips that might be helpful.

Tips and Hints – Building Rapport

- **Honesty** – be honest; don’t pretend to be interested if you are not. Try to be natural in the way that you start conversations.
- **Learn** – try and learn something new about the person that can give you a future connection (interests, hobbies, school attended or employment, friends, etc.) Take care that you don’t make this an interrogation.
- **Listen** – listen to what is being said.
- **Watch** – watch how the person behaves, as a way of learning how they behave normally.
- **Value** – value their opinions, particularly about matters that relate to the running of the library.

Observation and building rapport are important preventative or proactive techniques. Building relationships with young people can help to prevent problems. Through observation and building rapport, you gain invaluable information. You might learn about illegal activity in the library (or surrounding areas), you might learn about a problem that could be prevented and you might

learn how best to communicate with and relate to particular young people, which will be useful if there is ever an incident requiring your intervention.

Rapport building requires communication skills. We will now look at communication skills in greater detail.

Communicating with Young People

Many, many books have been written about communication. Often, these books assume a relationship between the people speaking with each other. While some of the information from these books is helpful, much is not directly relevant to your experience working in a library. We have tried to make the following information directly relevant to dealing with young people in libraries.

What affects communication in a library?

Each role that you carry out requires different communication and each situation will change and influence the way you need to respond. Some of the factors that will influence how you communicate include:

- **Situation** – a crisis situation will need a swift, directive response (“Stop drawing on the desk!”), whereas providing directions will require simple, clear explanation of a particular location (“The reference section is on the next floor on the right hand side”).
- **Audience composition** – the receivers of the message or the audience will determine how you will communicate. If you are talking to a hearing impaired person, you will have to speak more clearly and possibly more loudly; if you are talking to small child, you will have to use simple language; if you are talking with a group, you will have to speak loud enough for all to hear; etc. Also, the size of the audience watching you will affect how you communicate – some conversations will be better had in private. Giving someone wanting attention or someone who is getting angry an audience might make them even angrier.
- **Needs and wants** – what the receiver or audience needs or wants will dictate how you communicate. Trying to establish what the person or persons want will help you communicate with them. If they want to make a complaint, then listening to their concerns will often be helpful; if they want to know why they are being banned, then clear information about the reasons and process of banning will be important; if they want to show off to their friends, then not being drawn into conflict will be important.
- **Previous experiences** – if the young person has had negative experiences with library staff previously, then they might be more guarded than if they have had good experiences. If you have had conflict with that individual, then you might be expecting further troubles. Considering how previous experiences impact on communication will be helpful.
- **Relationship** – if you have a relationship with the person or persons, then you will have a better idea about how to communicate with them. You will have better understanding of their behaviour and be better able to read their

behaviour as a cue to whether they are calm, agitated or angry, intoxicated, upset, etc.

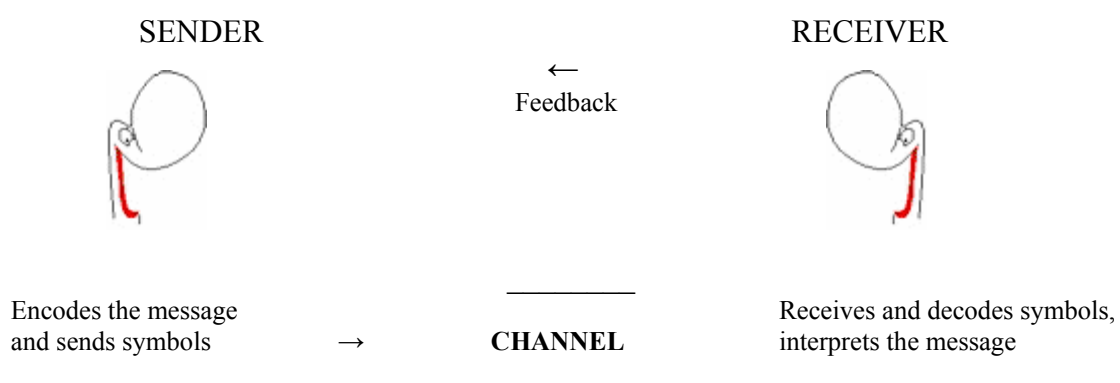
- **Communication skills** – each person can have different communication skills. Some young people will be very confident, while others will be shy; some will be aggressive, while others will be calm.
- **Background** – different cultures and religions can have (sometimes very subtle) differences in the “rules” for appropriate communication. For example, for some cultures it is a sign of respect to avoid eye contact with an adult or superior, while for other cultures, a person who avoids eye contact can be perceived as shy or dishonest. Age and gender can impact on the way a person communicates. Trying to learn and understand these differences will help to respond appropriately to each individual.

These are just some of the factors that will influence communication. You could think of many more from your experiences. Reflecting on exchanges, particularly those that result in an outcome that you are unhappy with, will help to improve your understanding of the way you communicate and how your communication can improve.

In order to improve your communication skills, you might find it useful first to learn a bit about how communication works, and some of the barriers to effective communication.

What is communication?

The simple diagram below, serves as an introduction to the basic elements of the communication process.



The *sender* is the person who has an idea, opinion, feeling, instruction etc that s/he wants to convey (a *message*). Before sending the message, it needs to be *encoded*, that is, translated into *symbols*, to which certain meanings are attached. These symbols can be *verbal* (words) and / or *non-verbal* (the written word, graphics, gestures, expressions, tone of voice etc). The message is then sent using

one, or a combination of, *channels* of communication, for example, in writing, by telephone, face to face. Having received the message, the *receiver* then needs to *decode*, or make sense of, the *symbols* received. The *receiver's* response to the message is known as *feedback*. Feedback tells the sender whether the message was received as the sender intended. In providing feedback, the process is repeated: encode, send, receive, decode...

It is important to remember that communication is a dynamic on-going process: at the same time as participants in the process are sending a message, they will also be receiving and decoding messages. Similarly, at the same time as a participant receives messages, s/he will also be sending messages, often of a non-verbal nature (for example, facial expressions, posture etc). Clearly, the process can become more complicated when the interaction is occurring between more than two people, or when two people are trying to interact when there are other people or distractions around. This could often be the case for your interactions with young people in a library.

Communication is not just the words that you say. Communication includes your facial expression, your body language (how you position yourself, how you stand, etc), the tone of your voice and the words that you use.

Non-verbal communication

An important component of the communication process is non-verbal communication. It has been said that in a two person interaction, as much as 65 per cent of the “social meaning of the situation” will be conveyed non-verbally.² Thus, for you to effectively communicate you need to be just as aware of what you are saying non-verbally as you are of the words you use. Furthermore, an awareness of non-verbal communication can help you to more accurately receive a message, particularly the feeling component of the message. Non-verbal communication is however, somewhat more complicated than it appears.

Different behaviours can have different meanings in different contexts. How often have you jumped to a conclusion about a person because of what you see them doing?

Be aware of how you position your body, your size (particularly if you are much taller than the people you have most contact with), your facial expression and the tone of your voice will often be more important than the words that you say.

Individual Exercise: The following table lists some common examples of behaviour. Take the time to consider what messages might be sent in the following situations.

² Johnson DW (1981) *Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualisation* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, p 132.

Scenario	Message Sent / Impact
Yawning while you are saying that you are really interested in what they have to say.	<i>Bored, disinterested. You won't be believed.</i>
Being six foot tall and standing looking down at a child while you are talking to them.	
Standing very close with your chest puffed out while talking to a young man.	
Constantly watching other people, while talking with a group of young people.	
Sitting down next to a group of young people and asking them about their day.	
Yelling at a young person who has just walked into the library.	

Being aware of your posture, your size, your voice, your facial expressions and the way that you speak is crucial to understanding how other people see you and how you communicate with others.

Remember, 65% of a social exchange will be conveyed non-verbally. If you get the body language right, then you will be about half way there.

Verbal Communication

While non-verbal communication will often convey the greatest amount, the words that you say will also be important. There will be some obvious guidelines in the language and words that you use as a library staff member. Below are some dos and don'ts.

DO	DON'T
Speak slowly and clearly	Mumble
Use language appropriate to the person you are speaking to	Use jargon or complicated language when talking to children
Use calming words and tones when someone is agitated	Talk fast to someone who is agitated
Shout if you need to get someone's immediate attention who might be in danger	Shout if it is unnecessary, because it is likely to result in them raising their voice
Speak quietly about matters that a person would not want shared	Talk about something important in a busy area of the library, instead of finding a quiet location

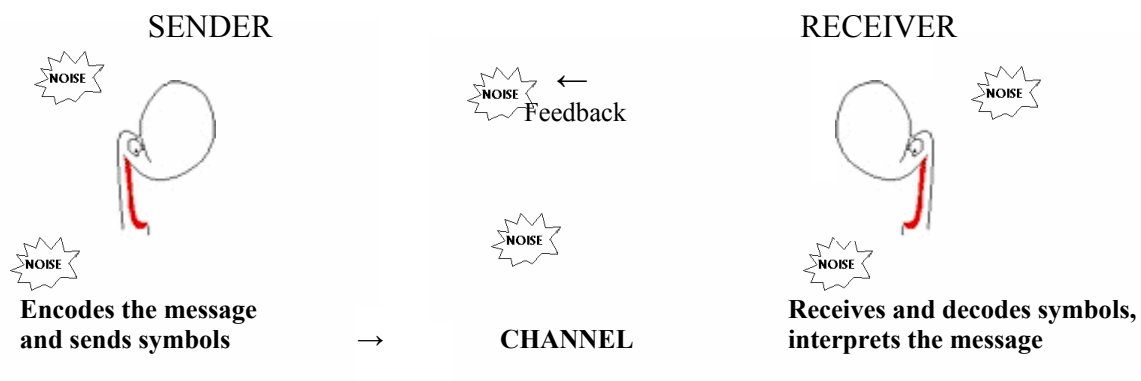
Many of these tips are very obvious and you are likely to do this as a matter of course. Reflecting and thinking about the words you use, the tone you use and how each situation calls for a different approach will help you improve your communication skills.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Communication does not occur in a vacuum, and as such, is subject to interference. Writers in the field of communication will often refer to this as *noise*.

“Noise is any element that interferes with the communication process. In the sender, noise refers to such things as attitudes, prejudices, frame of reference of the sender, and the appropriateness of their language or other expression of the message. In the receiver, noise refers to such things as their attitudes, backgrounds and experiences that affect the decoding process. In the channel, noise refers to (1) environmental sounds, such as static or traffic, (2) speech problems such as stammering, and (3) annoying or distracting mannerisms, such as a tendency to mumble”.³

Thus, “noise” can interfere at any point in the communication process.



Common barriers to effective communication include:

- Trust
- Power
- Differences
- Emotions
- Assumptions
- Inattention / Lack of interest
- Lack of feedback
- Poor expression
- Inconsistency
- Environmental “noise”
- Intercultural communication
- Other “Blockers”

³ Johnson DW (1981) *Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualisation* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, p 76.

A short description of each of these barriers to effective communication is contained below.

Trust

Lack of trust can get in the way of good communication. Where parties in the interaction do not trust each other (for any number of reasons), communication can be affected. A lack of trust can result in one party not accepting what is being said or causing a requirement to confirm with others the veracity of what has been stated. Either way, communication, or the exchange of information, is hampered by the absence of trust.

Power

The nature of the power relationship between a library staff member and young people can impact on the interaction. Some research studies (cited by Drury et al) have found that where the young person perceives an imbalance of power in the relationship,

- a) they may approach the interaction with a belief that they won't be given a fair hearing and give up before the conversation even starts ;
- b) communication in these types of relationships can be difficult for young people if they are not familiar with the "rules" or etiquette that applies to these sorts of interactions, which can be the case for many young people.⁴

Differences

Individual differences between the parties to the interaction may impact on the communication process (e.g. age, sex, differing confidence levels, educational differences, ethnic and cultural differences, and differences in personal beliefs, past experiences, attitudes, and intellectual abilities). Language differences can go beyond differences in the actual language itself, to include differences in pronunciations of certain words, differences in feelings about the tone used (some people find sarcasm funny, others can feel put down by sarcasm), differences in vocabulary and differences in understandings of certain expressions (e.g "get off the grass" or "fair crack of the whip"). Different cultures or individuals may attribute different meanings to certain non-verbal cues. We saw earlier that when young people present or behave in ways that are "different", such as in their dress, their tendency to gather in groups etc., these "differences" may engender fear or apprehension in others.

One Australian study found that "young people's perceptions of adults' beliefs about them made an important contribution to the explanation of problem behaviour involvement".⁵ That is, if the young person thinks the adult believes

⁴ Drury J, Catan L, Dennison C, Brody R (1998) "Exploring Teenagers' Accounts Of Bad Communication: A New Basis For Intervention" *Journal Of Adolescence* 1998, **21**, 177–196.

⁵ Stankey ME (2000) *Stereotypic Beliefs About Young People: Nature, Sources, And Consequences*. PhD thesis, School of Psychology, University of New South Wales August, 2000.

their behaviour will be problematic, then this perception can lead to problematic behaviour. The implication of this is that the attitudes you bring to your interactions with young people (or more importantly, what the young person thinks might be your attitude) may impact on the outcome of the interaction (bearing in mind that a whole lot of other factors may also be operating).

Emotions

Highly charged emotions (anger, fear, etc.) can interfere with the communication process. It can be very difficult to gather your thoughts, focus on the message being given, or speak clearly and logically when you are feeling highly emotional.

Assumptions

While there are times when assumptions can be important keys to understanding a situation, there are also times where assumptions can get in the way of the communication process. Assuming you know what a person is going to say or do before they have spoken or acted, responding to stereotypical beliefs about certain groups of people, thinking you know best without consulting with others involved and assuming you know the intentions of the person with whom you are interacting can all lead to misunderstandings, mistakes or conflict.

Inattention / Lack of interest

Communication can fail when participant(s) fail to show any interest or pay attention to what is being said, as the participant is not open to receiving the message.

Lack of feedback

Lack of feedback during the process is another potential inhibitor of communication. Without feedback from the receiver, the sender does not know whether “the receiver interpret[ed] the sender’s message the way the sender intended it...”⁶ This barrier can be seen in the “Chinese whispers” game, where a single message is passed in one direction through a number of channels, with each receiver not being able to provide feedback. Inevitably (even without intentional miscommunication), the final message received is different to the one originally sent.

Poor expression

The message may not be received correctly if it is not stated clearly, in language the receiver can understand. Giving too much information can result in the receiver not taking in all that was said.

Inconsistency

Messages need to be consistent for communication to be effective. If the sender has given conflicting messages at different times in the past, or even during this

⁶ Johnson DW (1981) *Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualisation* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, pp 76-77.

exchange, the receiver may not trust the integrity of, or the sender's commitment to, the message now being sent. Sometimes the inconsistency can come about because of the words used, sometimes it can be because the verbal message is inconsistent with the non-verbal message (e.g. the actions of the sender).

Environmental “noise”

External noises, competing sounds, distractions, poor hearing or eyesight, physical discomforts and poor ventilation are among some of the many physical factors that can impede the communication process. Most of these should not be a major problem in libraries, but will be in some situations.

Intercultural communication

There is every likelihood that at least a small proportion of the young people you deal with will come from a culture different from your own. There may be times where cultural differences can cause misunderstandings in the communication process. It may be that you and the young person do not share the same first language, or do not have the same level of English language skills. Rules of communication and etiquette, or non-verbal cues, may differ between cultures. An often cited example is that of eye contact. In Western cultures, eye contact is considered a positive trait, indicating honesty and openness (and indeed you will see that eye contact is generally recommended as one means of showing respect and genuine interest in the speaker) and therefore a person who avoids eye contact can be perceived as dishonest or shy. In some cultures, however, it is considered a mark of respect to lower the eyes and avoid eye contact.

Intercultural communication training goes beyond the limits of this manual. For now, we can only point out that cultural differences may impact on the communication process. If you think that you could benefit from more information on intercultural communication, you could ask your supervisor or employer about the possibility of organising a training session on this topic. Alternatively, you could contact a community organisation in your area that represents the culture you are seeking more information about.

Other “Blockers”

Responses that criticise, blame, are judgemental, distract, analyse or diagnose can get in the way of a person expressing themselves.

Individual Exercise: Identify “noises” or barriers to communication that have affected you in the past and suggest ways of overcoming these barriers.

Noise / Barrier	Example	How to Overcome
Power - example	<i>A young person was intimidated by my presence and wanted to test my authority</i>	<i>Maintain boundaries, but give power to young person – “tell me how we can work together”</i>
Power		
Trust		
Inconsistency		
Emotions		
Lack of Interest		

Given all this, it is little wonder that the communication process can sometimes go wrong. If you keep working at it, reflecting on what happened and how it can be improved and keep talking with your colleagues about how they manage situations, then you will learn from the times when it does not go exactly right.

Before we move on to consider some communication skills, it is worth noting that the way you communicate with young people will influence the way they respond. Being in a position of power and authority, you should set the example for young people. If you are inappropriate in the way that you communicate, then you can hardly expect or demand good treatment in return. The following quote sums up this notion:

“In helping other people learn more effective interpersonal skills, it is often helpful to model or demonstrate the skill and then reinforce the other person for engaging in it. Nothing teaches like a good example. Learning new behaviours by imitating others is a major means of acquiring new skills. By engaging in the needed skills you can encourage others to do likewise, and then you can reinforce them for doing so”.⁷

“Base” Skills for effective communication

Several specific skills, knowledge and attitudes have been identified as integral to effective communication. These include:

⁷ Johnson DW (1981) *Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualisation* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, p 187.

- Genuineness
- Acceptance
- Empathy
- Active listening skills
- Speaking skills

We cannot stress enough the importance of these *base* attitudes in your communications with young people.

Genuineness

Young people are good at detecting whether you are genuine or not. They will have had practice at school and at home in determining who really cares and who is faking it. Being aware of how you feel toward someone and being genuine will be important.

For example, in your encounter with a young person you might find that you are becoming increasingly angry or frustrated. To express this anger unreservedly may have the potential to increase the young person's defiance or resistance. However, if you are able to recognise and acknowledge to yourself that you are becoming angry, you are in a better position to control that anger and focus on strategies to resolve the issue appropriately.

Below are some tips (adapted from James and Gilliland) for communicating genuineness in your interactions with young people:

1. Be spontaneous, communicating freely with tact and diplomacy.
2. Be confident.
3. Be non-defensive. To be non-defensive it is important to have an understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses. This enables you to be open to hostile or negative messages from the young person without feeling attacked or defensive. In many cases, when a young person directs their anger or frustration at you, it will not be you *personally* who will be the target, you just happen to be the person who is in the line of fire. In these circumstances the attacks will be saying more about the young person and how s/he is feeling than it is about you. If, on the other hand, there is some truth in the attack or criticism ("That is so unfair!!"), your non-defensiveness will help you to control your feelings, leave room for you to rationally consider whether that is the case, and deal with the issue rather than get caught up in inappropriate argument
4. Being consistent. Genuine people have less discrepancies between what they say, think, feel and do
5. Being a sharer of self. When **appropriate**, a genuine person will allow others to see them and their feelings through their verbal and non-verbal communications.⁸

⁸ James RK and Gilliland BE (2001) *Crisis Intervention Strategies* Belmont CA: Wadsworth, pp 52-57.

Acceptance

The key attitude here is acceptance of the young person regardless of their views, opinions or behaviours. This is a useful adage for dealing with specific unacceptable behaviours from young people. The message you need to convey is “I reject your behaviour but not you as a person”. In communicating acceptance, you put aside your personal needs, values and desires and do not demand specific responses from the person for them to be accepted.⁹ “Acceptance is best defined as an attitude of *neutrality* toward another person or persons. When a person is accepting he offers an atmosphere largely uncontaminated by evaluations of the other’s thoughts feelings or behaviours”.¹⁰

One other important point that Bolton makes is that acceptance does not mean approval. **“I can accept another person’s feelings and still not approve of his behaviours. It is possible to be accepting and confrontative at the same time”.**¹¹ This is a useful piece of information to keep in mind when you are having to speak to a young person about unacceptable behaviour. It fits well with a rule of conflict resolution: “reject the behaviour, not the person”.

Example: A young man threatens another young man to get off an Internet computer so that he can use it.

“You cannot do that in this library. You can wait until he has finished or use another machine. You are free to stay here as long as you do not threaten other customers. Is there any reason why you will not be able to do that?”

Empathy

Empathy is both an attitude and a skill. It tells the person that you want to hear and understand what it is like to be “in their shoes”. It tells the person that you are interested and prepared to put some effort into hearing what they have to say.

Empathy is not the same as sympathy. Empathy is “feeling with” another person, while “sympathy” is “feeling for” the person. Sympathy can be patronising. When you have an attitude of empathy, you acknowledge and “hear” the other person’s feeling, but you do not lose your separateness from that person. Empathy is a “kind of detached involvement with the feeling world of another person”.¹²

Here, Bolton’s table showing the continuum from apathy to sympathy is particularly useful:

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Bolton, R (2003) *People Skills: how to assert yourself, listen to others, and resolve conflicts*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 265.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 272.

Apathy	Empathy	Sympathy
"I don't care"	"Looks like you're really feeling down today"	"You poor thing"
"That's your problem"	"Sounds as if you were really hurt by that"	"I feel just <i>dreadful</i> for you!"

Source: Bolton 2003: 270

To communicate empathy is to a) accurately pick up on the sender's thoughts and feelings, and b) communicate back to the speaker what the receiver understands it to be like for the speaker. The strategy for communicating empathy is often called "active listening".

Active listening

As the term implies, active listening requires that the listener show that s/he is listening, by sending out appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues.

Active listening serves three purposes:

- It sends a message to the young person that you are interested in what they have to say
- It is a means for checking that the message you are receiving is the message the young person intended to send.
- It is also a means of communicating empathy: "I want to understand what it is like for you".

"When you listen accurately and respond relevantly, you communicate to the sender, 'I care about what you are saying and I want to understand it'. When you fail to listen and respond irrelevantly, you communicate to the sender, 'I don't care about what you are saying, and I don't want to understand it'".¹³

When you are listening actively you will indicate that you are doing so by both verbal and non-verbal means: by your *attending behaviour* and your *reflective responses*. Attending behaviour is appropriate to any of the goals of your interactions with young people. Paraphrasing and reflective responses will be more appropriate for circumstances in which the message the young person is trying to convey is complex, or is becoming muddled (they are strategies for ensuring you are receiving the message correctly). These two types of responses are also appropriate when the young person is expressing an emotional component to the message (they provide you with strategies for letting the young person know that you are hearing how things are for them).

¹³ Johnson DW (1981) *Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualisation* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, p 90.

Attending¹⁴

For the most part, these are the non-verbal signs you give that you are being attentive to the speaker. You focus fully on the young person, you put aside your concerns. It is “both an attitude and a skill”. Failure to attend to what is being said or conveyed can give the impression that you are not interested, or can cause you to misunderstand the message. The following non-verbal cues can convey that you are involved, committed, concerned and trustworthy. At the same time, they can help you focus on the person and reduce the chances of you being distracted:

- Nodding
- Maintaining eye contact (but not staring or glaring)
- Smiling when appropriate, keeping a serious expression when appropriate
- Leaning forward if sitting, or having an open stance if standing
- Being close enough to the young person, but taking care not to invade the young person’s personal space
- Your tone of voice can also tell the young person whether you are attending or not
- Responses such as “I see”, “uh huh”, “OK”, “Go on”, etc., verbalised appropriately can also show that you are listening and encourage the young person to continue talking (responses such as this are sometimes called “door openers”).

Achieving the balance as to what is appropriate takes practice, self-awareness and an awareness of how the young person is reacting to the signs you are conveying. To look too concerned, to stare instead of maintaining appropriate eye contact, to be too close to the young person, can be just as inappropriate as looking anywhere at all but at the young person, or standing with your back to the young person. Attending is an on-going process throughout the interaction. While you are attending to the young person’s verbal and non-verbal messages, you will also be able to pick up cues from the young person which will give you clues as to whether you are building rapport with the young person, or whether you are doing or saying something that could negatively affect the interaction or cause the young person to become fearful, defensive or to lose confidence in the interaction.

Silence

Sometimes, we can overlook the power of silence. “Remaining silent but attending closely...can convey deep empathic understanding”.¹⁵ Appropriately used, silence can also give the young person time to think without pressure of questions or lectures from you. Silence can give you time to digest what the young person is saying and formulate a response that is more likely to be helpful and on target.

¹⁴ James RK and Gilliland BE (2001) *Crisis Intervention Strategies* Belmont CA: Wadsworth.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 55.

Paraphrasing / reflective responses

Paraphrasing is also known in the literature as giving understanding responses or reflective responses. It is a strategy for expressing *empathic understanding*. Some writers in the field of communication will distinguish between paraphrasing the verbal content of a message (the words the person uses) and reflecting back the feeling component of the message (which could be communicated both verbally and non-verbally).

A natural tendency for many of us is to respond to what another person is saying by giving *evaluative, judgemental, blaming or approval* responses. That is, we say things like “I agree with you”; “I think you are wrong”; “that’s not how you should feel”, “don’t be so angry”. These types of responses don’t tell the speaker what it is you heard them say, rather they tell them what you think about what they said. Paraphrasing takes a step back. Before you present your own point of view, you first try to “get into the other person’s shoes” and understand the message he is sending so well that you are able to restate that message in your own words.

It should be noted here that the message the young person is sending will often be communicated both verbally and non-verbally. According to James and Gilliland, to show empathic understanding, you also need to accurately pick up on non-verbal as well as verbal messages, which can be transmitted in any number of ways. For example, facial expression, body movements or posture, gestures, voice tone. Non-verbal messages can show any number of emotions: anger, sadness, puzzlement, fear, stress and hopelessness, for example. You need to be aware of whether the non-verbal messages being sent are congruent with the verbal messages.

James and Gilliland stress that it is important not to read more into the non-verbal than is actually there: “Communicating empathy in the non-verbal realm is no place for fishing expeditions or long-shot hunches”.¹⁶

In addition, it is also important to remember that paraphrasing is just that: a restatement of the message the young person is sending. Just as it is inappropriate to read more into the non-verbal messages, it would also be inappropriate in these circumstances to enter into the realm of interpreting the message “you are feeling angry because of a deep-seated problem with your parents...”

The non-verbal messages you send during the exchange will also be important. Are your verbal messages congruent with your non-verbal messages? It is not very helpful to the communication process if you say you are interested in what the young person is saying, but your non-verbal messages (facial expressions, posture, tone of voice, etc.) show you are not interested. If you can communicate non-verbally and verbally that you are tuned in to what is being said, you have a better chance of making the young person feel that you are willing to hear his / her side of the story.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 54.

In summary, a good listener:

1. Lets others finish what they are saying without interrupting them;
2. Asks questions, if they are confused;
3. Pays attention to what others are saying and shows they are paying attention by keeping comfortable eye contact. They don't let their eyes wander around the room;
4. Remains open-minded, ready to revise their opinion;
5. Uses feedback and paraphrasing skills;
6. Pays attention to non-verbal signals, such as the speaker's body language; and
7. Doesn't "tune out" inappropriately when others are speaking¹⁷

Speaking Skills

We saw earlier in the section on barriers to communication that there are a number of "noises" that can interfere with effectively sending a message, such as lack of clarity of the message, poor expression, or inconsistency of the message.

We list here some strategies for speaking effectively:

1. Before you say or do anything, think about the purpose of your communication with the young person. If you are clear in your own mind about the purpose of your interaction, then you are less likely to send *inconsistent* messages about that purpose. Sometimes it may be helpful to verbalise your purpose, for example, "my job is to sort out this problem". At other times it will not be necessary and may even be unhelpful, for example "I'm talking to you today so we build trust and rapport".
2. Think about what it is you want to say before you say it.
3. Use language and concepts the young person will understand. This involves taking into account, for example, the young person's age, cognitive ability, English language skills.
4. Make your verbal and non-verbal messages consistent. When people communicate face-to-face, they send both verbal and non-verbal messages. When you ask the question "Can I help you?" with a smile or an inquiring look, and / or a pleasant tone of voice, both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication are saying the same thing – you are willing to help. The same question with a sneer, and / or a gruff tone of voice can give a mixed or inconsistent message. The young person may be left with the thought, "I don't really know whether you want to help me or not".
5. If you are giving a complex message, or a message that it is very important the young person understands, ask for feedback about how your message was received. For example, if you are telling the young person what the

¹⁷ Cava, R (1990) *Dealing with Difficult People: Proven Strategies for handling stressful situations and defusing tension*. London: Platkus, p. 52.

consequences of his / her inappropriate behaviour might be, don't just ask "do you understand?" (you will most likely get a nod). You could ask instead, "just so we don't misunderstand each other, can you tell me what will happen if you keep doing [this behaviour]" (or anything similar that feels comfortable for you and appropriate to situation, the age etc of the young person). Your non-verbal communications will be important here: if your tone of voice or facial expressions are threatening, the young person will likely feel intimidated, may not be able to answer your question adequately, or may even become defiant or defensive. The message you want to convey both verbally and non-verbally is simply that you want to be sure that the message you sent is the message the young person received.

6. If you are giving information, state the information clearly. If there is a lot of information to give, you may need to break it down and ask for **feedback** as you go. Include all the information the young person needs to understand the message.

Much of this information is likely to merely clarify or reinforce how you already communicate with young people. By reading through this information you might have identified a few areas of your practice that require closer inspection. Communication skills need to be worked at. Try to find ways of practicing and reviewing how you communicate with young people. Monitor your attitude and your tone; review the outcomes of your communication with young people; observe people that you think are effective communicators and isolate the strategies that they use effectively and try them yourself.

Section 4: Understanding Young People

Throughout this package we have focused on young people without actually defining who we mean. This section will focus on young people in an attempt to give you some insight into who we have been talking about and how this will help you in your work.

There are many different terms used to describe people between 12-24 years, which is the age group generally defined by the term and concept “youth”. Terms such as adolescent, youth, teenager and young person are often used to describe persons between 12 and 24 years, although the group between 12 and 18 will often be the group who you would have most contact with. This is the age span in which parents generally start to allow their children to go to places like libraries unsupervised.

Young People – Some Facts

New South Wales

According to the 2006 Census¹⁸, there are 1,141,199 young people aged between 12 and 24 years in New South Wales, which is 17.4% of the total population in the State. Of these young people, 36,613 identified as Indigenous, while 1,035,705 stated that they were not Indigenous. A further 68,881 did not declare if they were or were not Indigenous. Therefore, approximately 3.2% of the young people aged between 12 and 24 in New South Wales identify as Indigenous.

Australia¹⁹

The following is a collection of statistics covering an array of indices. These statistics are presented here to provide some insight into the experiences of young people.

- In 2004/05, the proportions of young males and females aged 18-24 years reporting high or very high levels of distress were 12% and 19% respectively. This represents an increase from 1997 when the corresponding proportions were 7% and 13% respectively.
- In 2004, 272 young people aged 12-14 committed suicide.
- Patterns of injury in young people are distinct from other age groups, showing the strong influence that stage of life has on susceptibility to certain types of injury. Greater responsibility for decision-making creates more opportunity for young people to engage in risky behaviours.
- The ABS 2004/05 National Health Survey estimated that 845,310 injury events occurred among young people in the four weeks preceding the survey. Of these:

¹⁸ Cat. No. 2068.0 – 2006 Census Tables New South Wales, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

¹⁹ The following information is from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2007) *Young Australians Health and Wellbeing*, Canberra.

- 34% were due to being cut with a knife, tool or other implement
 - 20% were due to hitting something or being hit by something
 - 20% were due to low falls
- In 2004/05, the most common external cause of injury leading to hospitalisation among young people was transport accidents.
- In 2004, the leading cause of death for young Australians was land transport accidents (442 deaths), followed by intentional self harm (suicide – 272 deaths) and accidental poisoning (74 deaths).
- According to the ABS 2004/05 National Health Survey, 25% of the young people aged 15-24 years were overweight or obese.
- In 2006, there were 9,276 young people aged 12-17 years on care and protection orders and 8,332 in out-of-home care.
- Indigenous young people were 6 times as likely as other Australians to be on care and protection orders and to be placed in out-of-home care.
- In 2004, 17% of 12-24 year olds were current smokers.
- According to the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 31% of 12-24 year olds drank once or more a month, at levels that put them at risk or high risk of alcohol related harm in the short term. Furthermore, this survey indicated that 23% of young people aged 12-24 years had used an illicit drug in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- In 2004, the mean age of initiation for first drug use for young people aged between 12 and 24 years was:
 - 14.5 years for tobacco
 - 14.7 years for alcohol
 - 15.7 years for marijuana
 - 18 years for meth/amphetamines
 - 18.4 years for ecstasy
- In the 12 months prior to the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 31% of young people aged 14-24 years were the victim of drug-related violence (including alcohol-related violence)
- In 2005, 14% of 18-24 year olds were the victims of physical assault, 10% of physical threats and 2% of sexual assault.
- The rate of Indigenous 12-17 year olds in juvenile justice supervision was 13 times the non-Indigenous rate.

Individual Exercise: The Department of Local Government requires Councils in NSW to develop social or community plans for their areas. These social plans provide a detailed analysis of the demographics profile of the area and identify the services available to specific population groups. To better understand the needs of young people in your area, locate the social plan for your area and review the sections relating to young people. Does this information reflect what you

experience in the library? Are there groups of young people in your area that appear not to be accessing the library?

Improving your understanding of young people, how they behave and what is important to them will help in knowing how best to deal with them. Adolescence is a time of growth; a time of growing independence and increasing understanding of the way the world operates. Getting older does not necessarily mean that you will learn everything you need to know, but for the majority of young people, learning through mistakes or trial and error will be a critical feature of adolescence. Remembering that young people are learning and that they will make mistakes can help in responding to them.

Adolescence

Adolescence as a concept is said by some to have a relative short history. While some historical texts describe adolescence, it is generally believed that the concept of adolescence emerged after the industrial revolution. The abolition of child labour, the evolution of school as an institution, the emergence of separate institutions for young delinquents and extended reliance on the family emerged after the industrial revolution. Prior to this time, it was not uncommon for children to work, to be indentured as apprentices and leave the family home for work or marriage. Now, while the exact period of adolescence is debated, it is apparent that the period known as adolescence has increased. Financial independence might not be achieved until the mid-twenties after extended periods of education and reliance on the family for financial and other support.

Adolescence is a time of physical, emotional and cognitive development. This means that bodies are changing, identities are being formed and thinking is becoming less concrete. Young people are more able to understand what it is like from another perspective than children and are starting to develop greater insight into their own behaviour. The following provides some simple insights into the critical changes and issues facing young people as they mature through adolescence.

Physical Development

Adolescence is clearly a period of physical development. The key physical developments include:

- **Rapid gains** - In height and weight.
- **Development of secondary sex characteristics** - During puberty, changing hormonal levels play a role in activating the development of secondary sex characteristics.

- **Continued brain development** - Recent research suggests that young people's brains are not completely developed until late in adolescence. Specifically, studies suggest that the connections between neurons affecting emotional, physical and mental abilities are incomplete. This could explain why some teens seem to be inconsistent in controlling their emotions, impulses, and judgments.²⁰

Many of these physical changes will have social consequences. Concerns about body image, worries about weight gain and changing appearance, and clumsiness associated with growth spurts are just some of the potential issues emerging during this period.

Cognitive Development

Adolescence is a time of cognitive development. This means that there are developments in advanced reasoning and thinking skills. For example, the following are common cognitive developments occurring in adolescence:

- Developing advanced reasoning skills which include the ability to think about multiple options and possibilities. It includes a more logical thought process and the ability to think about things hypothetically. It involves asking and answering the question, "what if...?".
- Developing abstract thinking skills, which enables thinking about things that cannot be seen, heard, or touched. Examples include things like faith, trust, beliefs and spirituality.
- Developing the ability to think about thinking in a process known as "meta-cognition." Meta-cognition allows individuals to think about how they feel and what they are thinking. It involves being able to think about how one is perceived by others.²¹

Apart from these cognitive developments, some commentators have suggested that there are certain tasks that we must achieve in adolescence. These tasks relate to maturity and growth.

"Havinghurst (1953) identifies 10 developmental tasks during adolescence:

1. Achieving newer and more mature relations with members of both sexes
2. Achieving a masculine or feminine role
3. Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively
4. Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults
5. Achieving some assurance of economic independence
6. Selecting and preparing for an occupation
7. Preparing for marriage and family life
8. Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence

²⁰ Huebner, A. (2000) 'Adolescent Growth and Development', Virginia State University.

²¹ Huebner, A. (2000) 'Adolescent Growth and Development', Virginia State University.

9. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour
10. Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behaviour”.²²

“Selverstone (1989) believes that the 10 developmental tasks during adolescence may be clustered into 4 main categories:

1. **Identity** - which involves the determination of the question “who am I?”
2. **Connectedness** - which includes establishing relationships with peers
3. **Power** – the development of a sense of control and power
4. **Hope / joy** - which is achieved via the accomplishment of the previous three tasks”.²³

Recent research is shedding light on adolescent brain development, which has important implications for our understanding of adolescent cognitive development. Due to improvements in relevant brain imaging technology, it is now possible to better map brain development throughout life stages or development. The findings from this research suggest that brain development does not cease nearly as early as previously predicted. Rather, considerable brain development continues into early adulthood.

A recent article in YAPA’s monthly newsletter highlighted some of the key issues and implications of this research. It has been reproduced below.

²² Slee, P. (2002) *Child, Adolescent and Family Development*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 425.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 426.

Adolescent development & risk-taking

By Clinical Associate Professor David Bennett, The Children's Hospital*

Recent research from the field of neuroscience is shedding new light on the question of why teenagers engage in reckless risk taking behaviours. In the past we've blamed raging hormones and peer pressure, but some neuroscientists believe there may be more to it...

Life is a risky business. We all take chances, and there are risks involved in practically everything we do. Taking risks is certainly a natural part of growing up. Teenagers have a special thirst for new experiences. They experiment with new activities, test their limits, explore new skills, and enjoy the often exhilarating sense of freedom involved.

Our understanding of adolescent risk taking has been greatly enhanced by recent findings from neuroscience - research using *magnetic resonance imaging* (MRI) on the brains of children at two year intervals. While some areas of the human brain are mature by the end of childhood, the *prefrontal cortex* - responsible for such things as impulse control and strategic planning (anticipating the likely consequences of one's actions) - continue maturing through the teenage years.

In other words, the adolescent brain is still developing and the highest-level areas may not be completely mature until kids hit their twenties. This also means that teenage brains may be constructed in a way that makes their owners more open to ideas, more amenable to change (a time of heightened opportunity), but also makes young people *more likely to experiment and take risks* (a time of heightened risk). An immature brain, together with the hormones that stir them up and drive them to be thrill-seekers (especially for boys), is a potentially dangerous mix.

What are the implications of this research?

The prefrontal cortex has been called 'the area of sober second thought' because, as this part of the brain matures, teenagers can reason better, develop more self control and make better judgements. This is a helpful insight for those who may be struggling to understand an early adolescent's erratic and otherwise 'infuriatingly normal behaviour'. Since adolescence tends to be a time of increased freedoms and decreased parental monitoring - what most teenagers seem to want - these research findings also suggest we may sometimes be giving young people more freedoms than they can handle.

Research into parenting styles over the past quarter century or so shows that the most effective approach, so-called 'authoritative parenting', has three main characteristics:

- Parenting that is warm, involved and responsive
- Parenting that is firm and strict (with developmentally appropriate expectations)
- Parenting that fosters and encourages psychological autonomy.

Adolescents from authoritative (warm and firm) homes achieve more in school; have better self-reliance & self-esteem; report less depression and anxiety; show more positive social behaviour, self-control, cheerfulness & confidence; and (most importantly) are *less likely to engage in anti-social and risk-taking behaviour*.

These outcomes confirm that teenagers are safer when their parents take a close and caring interest in what they're getting up to and set appropriate ground-rules in advance. In the light of the MRI brain research, better monitoring, negotiated boundaries and predictable consequences are needed to better protect young people!

What are the implications for those working in youth injury prevention?

The MRI brain researchers caution us not to 'jump to conclusions' in regard to drawing too close a link between structure and function; they say there is more work to be done in terms of understanding human behaviour. But there are potential implications for safety related to what we now know about adolescent brain development. For example:

- Should we consider raising the driving age to 18 years (as in some areas of the United States) to allow time for young drivers to acquire better impulse control?
- Should we establish passenger limits for teenagers with P1 licences to lessen distractions and enable better concentration while driving?
- Should we (an even more draconian idea) create curfews for adolescent drivers, because of the special risks of late night/early morning accidents, especially after parties?

There are no simple answers to these questions, but if our goal is the avoidance of unintended injury and premature death in young people, then neuroscience may be pointing the way to new ways of thinking about protective factors in this area.

More information

Here are some short and longer articles in plain English about this research.

- This article is a bit outdated but it provides a good summary in plain English: www.actforyouth.net/documents/may02factsheetadolbraindev.pdf
- This targets parents but is a useful 1 page summary (108KB PDF): <http://wwwstatic.kern.org/gems/schcom/EyeonPreventBrain.Dev.1.pdf> (Note there is no dot in wwwstatic)
- TIME magazine article: "What Makes Teens Tick" May 10, 2004 www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,994126,00.html
- Written from the point of view of mental health workers (775KB PDF): http://youngminds.org.uk/sos/SOS_YM_AdolescentBrain.pdf
- Spano, S (2003) "Adolescent brain development" Youth Studies Australia Vol 22 (1):36-38

Notes

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Youth Participation

While information about adolescent brain development increases and our understanding of neuropsychology improves, it is important that we don't lose sight of the abilities of young people and what they contribute to the community and to society at large. In recent decades there has been considerable focus on the benefits of involving young people in decision-making, especially those decisions that directly affect their lives.

Models of Youth Participation

Youth participation can take numerous forms. The establishment of youth advisory councils and the appointment of young people to government boards are perhaps two of the most obvious methods of enhancing youth participation.

The United Nations' World Youth Report (2003) identifies the following methods of youth participation:

- Research – many examples exist of young people being provided with training as researchers and then undertaking independent investigations focusing on issues of direct concern to them
- Programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Peer support, representation and advocacy.
- Policy analysis and development.
- Campaigning and lobbying.
- Development and management of their own organisations.
- Participation in and use of the media.
- Conference participation.
- Youth councils and parliaments.²⁴

Not all attempts at engaging or involving young people in decision-making provide the same opportunities for participation. Rather, some methods might give the appearance of participation, when in fact they remain adult-centric or adult-owned, with little or no power being afforded to young people. As participatory measures have increased, more attention has been paid to notions of power sharing, ownership, roles assumed by young people and adults, initiation of ideas / concepts and effectiveness. Various models have been developed to illustrate some of the relationships operating within particular youth participation approaches.

Perhaps the most familiar model is that developed by Roger Hart. Hart's ladder of participation attempts to demonstrate the level of power, influence and ownership shared by children, young people and adults in decision-making.

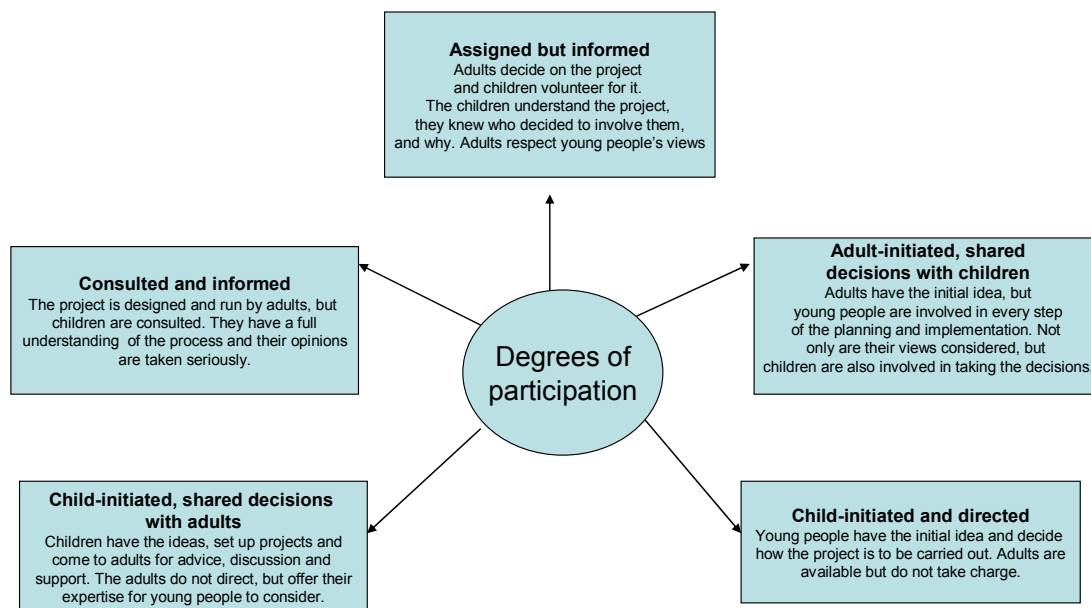
²⁴ United Nations (2003) *World Youth Report*, at 280.

Table 1: Hart's Ladder of Participation²⁶

8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Children and young people have the ideas, set-up the project, and invite adults to join them in making decisions.
7. Child-initiated and directed	Children and young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	Adults have the initial ideas but children and young people are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Their views are not only considered but they are also involved in making the decisions.
5. Consulted and informed	The project is designed and run by adults but children and young people are consulted. They have full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
4. Assigned but informed	Adults decide on the project but children and young people volunteer for it. The children and young people understand the project and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.
3. Tokenism	Children and young people are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.
2. Decoration	Children and young people take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing t-shirts with logos on, but they really do not understand the issues.
1. Manipulation	Children and young people do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR children and young people are asked about what they think and adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have on the final decision.

²⁶ As depicted by Keenan, P. (2005) *Turning up the sound: The feasibility of establishing a consortium to support the involvement of children and young people in public decision-making processes*, at 11.

Hart's model has been criticised for, amongst other things, failing to consider the political features of decision-making.²⁷ Treseder, concerned that Hart's model places too little importance in the lower rungs of the ladder, devised a non-hierarchical model. According to Cutler (2003), Treseder's model "recognises that different types of involvement are valid for different young people at different times, according to their own wishes as well as what is possible for an organisation".²⁸



Treseder's Model of Participation

A critical factor throughout any analysis of youth participation is the impact of age. The wide age span covered by definitions of young people reveal the potential challenges of effectively engaging all young people between 12 and 25 years of age. The competencies and needs of a 12 year-old will be distinct from a young adult who has entered employment, left the parental home and is married with children. In this context, youth participation requires sensitivity to age and the different demands, needs and competencies often associated with life course development.

Individual Exercise: Young people's involvement in decision-making can help them to better understand the need for rules and to appreciate the challenges of maintaining environments such as libraries. Spend some time thinking about how

²⁷ Burfoot, D. (2003) 'Children and young people's participation: arguing for a better future', *Youth Studies Australia*, Vol. 22, no. 3, 2003.

²⁸ Cutler, D. (2003) *Standards – Organisational Standards and Young People's Participation in Public Decision-Making*, at 7.

much young people have participated in decisions like which books should be stocked at the library; how the youth section of the library should be designed; and the rules governing the library. Now consider the structures that exist in your Council to involve young people in such decisions. The Youth Development Officer (or other staff in the relevant section of council) might be able to provide some assistance.

Peers and Public Behaviour

It is accepted that our behaviour will be shaped by the behaviour of others. As we grow, the behaviour of adults will be particularly important. It has been shown that the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of our parents will be especially crucial to the formation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in young people.

Libraries are key areas where people congregate. It is an environment that is easy to be seen and to see others. Catching up with friends, checking out the girls and boys and meeting new friends are common experiences / practices of young people in libraries. These are important features of adolescence. One theorist (Elkind, 1967 and 1970) has “stressed the importance of the imaginary audience as one form of adolescent egocentrism. This concept accounts for adolescent’s concerns that they are the focus of other people’s attention. With this preoccupation, adolescents are then continually constructing or reacting to an audience”.²⁹ This concept of the imaginary audience can be very useful in understanding the behaviour of young people in libraries. The presence of peers and the imaginary audience combine to make public places important theatres for young people. The way they are seen to behave might have significant consequences for their relationships with their peers. Getting into trouble at the library might have greater kudos than the fear of the consequences.

Individual Exercise: Think about the following:

- You approach a group of young males and ask them to soften their voices because they are causing fear in other patrons. One of the young men refuses to calm down and puts on quite a display in front of his peers.
- A young woman is out with friends when one of her parents comes over. She says “shame” and tries to hurry them away.
- You have got to know a young man over numerous weeks. He comes to the library on Thursday evenings with a small group of friends. They are always well behaved. On this one evening, the young man is with a different group. They are playing up – shouting, having mock fights and generally disturbing other people. You approach the group and he steps forward. He is aggressive in his approach. He wants to know why they are being picked on.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 428.

In these situations try to interpret and understand the behaviours and consider the importance of the peer group.

Based on this information, how will it affect the way that you deal with groups of young people? How will you try to remove the audience when you are dealing with an individual young person? How will you use the potential influence of peers to help control behaviour in the library?

Managing Challenging Behaviour

Developing an understanding of the young people who patronize your library will help inform how you manage their behaviour. Building rapport, providing a clean library, having clear policies regarding behavioural expectations and working as a team to developing responses to common problems will all assist in maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour. The following information will specifically help in setting standards of behaviour and in responding to particular incidents involving young people (and in fact all patrons).

The following checklist has been adapted from **A Package of Information for Managing Challenging Behaviour**, developed by the Department of Community Services. While the original checklist was designed for children's services, it has relevance to how libraries can ensure and maintain appropriate standards of behaviour.

- ☒ Set rules (state them positively) and display them
- ☒ Set limits and define boundaries
- ☒ Be alert to warning signs of escalating inappropriate behaviour
- ☒ Establish consistency in behaviour management between staff
- ☒ Only state a consequence you are prepared / able to follow through
- ☒ Work with strengths and interests to promote and reinforce desired behaviour
- ☒ Comment frequently and specifically to reinforce desired behaviour
- ☒ Use language consistent with the developmental level of the young person
- ☒ When behaviour is clearly non-compliant, give the child responsibility for their actions

Individual Exercise: Audit the arrangements regarding behavioural standards in your library against the above checklist. Raise any aspects that are not addressed at your library with management.

The above checklist is useful in the overall context of managing behaviour in the library. However, it provides little assistance when you are directly confronted by a young patron who is challenging you. The following model provides some guidance about how to respond during such an incident. This model should not be a substitute for in-depth conflict resolution training that provides opportunities to practice and rehearse methods of responding to conflict and challenging behaviour.

The TRUCE model is based on research undertaken into police-citizen interactions. During observations of such interactions, qualities were identified that appeared to be associated with the peaceful resolution of conflict. The researchers recommended that police should be trained in methods such as TRUCE, as a means of reducing conflict and increasing opportunities to de-escalate situations. While the model has been developed specifically in relation to police-citizen interactions, it is believed that the model has direct relevance to other personnel in different circumstances.

Individual Exercise: Review this model and consider its relevance to your work.

1. **Topic:** tell the person why you're there or why you are intervening
2. **Resolution:** discuss what you hope to achieve and negotiate
3. **Under control:** stay cool and focused in the face of escalating hostility.
4. **Communicate:** maintain the dialogue – avoid physical contact.
5. **Evaluate:** monitor the outcomes and be prepared to adapt (Wilson and Braithwaite, 1996: 34).

Topic	"Are you aware that eating in the library is not accepted?"
Resolution	"I need you to either eat that outside or to stop eating inside".
Under control	Self-talk – "Stay calm. Let them ventilate and we can keep working through this when they have calmed down".
Communicate	"It is obvious that you aren't happy with the rule, but I do need you to obey the rules. Thank you for agreeing to go outside".
Evaluate	Self-talk – "They seem to be responding. If they keep eating in the library, I am going to have to warn them and speak with a manager".

The above table lists a few scripts consistent with the TRUCE model. Note that two stages (under control and evaluate) will involve self-talk. By talking to yourself, especially if you are confronted by aggressive or insulting behaviour, it can help to keep you focused on your outcome and not to be dragged into a fight. Keep telling yourself what your role is and what your goal is and this can help maintain control rather than reacting to what is being said.

Individual Exercise: Apply the TRUCE model to the following scenarios:

- A young person calls you an idiot after you speak with them about staying on the computer too long.
- A small group of young people are being loud in a group study room. You move into the room and politely ask them to keep the noise down. A member of the group tells you to "piss off".
- A young person who has been banned from the library returns. As you approach him, he stands up from the table and looks ready to fight.

There is no single right way to respond to any situation. Rather, practicing and reviewing performance will build confidence and improve your behaviour management techniques.

Summary:

Young people aged between 12 and 24 represent approximately 17% of the population of NSW and frequently represent a higher proportion of library patrons. Many of these young people will experience diverse challenges during their adolescent years. Rising mental illness, extended periods of education, longer periods in the family home and changing labour markets means that for many young people there are many challenges to entering the adult world. Some of the characteristics make libraries increasingly attractive places to recreate and socialise.

Peers tend to have a greater influence on young people through adolescence than in any other life stage or period. Personalities and behaviours are frequently tested in the peer group context. Acceptance and belonging are two significant needs of young people that can be met by the peer group. Consequently, behaviour in front of and with peers will be directly inscribed by peer relationships. Avoiding putting young people “on show” in front of their peers is one way to demonstrate an understanding of the powerful influence of peers.

Section 5: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

Before reviewing some key considerations in relation to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, it is worth reflecting for a moment upon what life might be like for some young people in Australia. Consider the following questions:

- **How do you think that experiences of refugee camps might impact on a young person?**
- Having been displaced, lost family members and been separated from others, you arrive in a foreign country with a foreign language and foreign customs. You grew up in a small farming community and are suddenly placed in medium density housing in a Sydney suburb. It is also unlikely you have had much schooling or had any experience of public libraries.
- **How do you think parents cope with raising their children in a country many thousands of miles from their birthplace?**
- Parenting in your country of origin was regarded as a somewhat communal activity. Children were known throughout the town. Any misbehaviour was quickly brought to the attention of the relevant parents. Many people stayed in the same area as their parents, whereby multiple generations mingled and looked out for each other. When you left your country of origin, you travelled to Australia with just a handful of friends. These friends are dotted all across the country. You feel quite isolated raising your children.
- **How might simple things like diet and opportunities to practice religion be different in Australia?**
- One of your first memories of arriving in Australia was how the food wasn't the same as home. It didn't seem to matter how much care was taken in preparing a meal, it never tasted the same. Going to church was also different. At home, the church was in walking distance. In Sydney, your family had to travel across the city to find the right church.

Discussing issues of culture, ethnicity, religion, customs and language are complicated by personal and individual experiences. One person might navigate issues outlined above more easily than another; one might draw strength from cultural heritage, while another will feel shame; one might gravitate to people from a similar cultural background, while another will reject such friends. Despite the importance of considering individual experiences, it is also beneficial to review wider issues in relation to young people from CALD backgrounds. Given the centrality of libraries in the lives of many young people and the potential acceptance of libraries as safe places by parents, it is useful to strive to learn more about the experiences of CALD young people.

Individual Exercise: The following text is from Aarushi Sahore (13 years, NSW). This essay was short-listed in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Human Writes Essay Competition. Read this essay and then visit the HREOC website (www.hreoc.gov.au) to review other essays submitted by young people from across Australia.

Human Rights

By Aarushi Sahore, 13, NSW

Aarushi's essay is a mature narration of what human rights mean to her and how the idea integrates into everyday life.

I belong to an Australian community, speak Hindi and English, am Hindu and was born in India. Different rights are relevant to my existence; rights for children, education, freedom and liberty. The right to practise my chosen religion and speak a chosen language, without anybody trying to stop me or making incorrect assumptions about me. Rights as a female, to be respected as an equal gender, with equal potential. It is my duty to make sure that my rights are respected and stand up for my beliefs and freedoms when they are violated or potentially violated.

Another extremely important thing is to respect everyone else's rights. To look at each person as an individual and respect every one of their characteristics, all their beliefs and chosen ways of life. If discrimination occurs, I should try and make people put all differences aside and respect one another. I should support people and organisations that work to protect everyone's rights. I need to learn to look at individuals singularly and not make judgements or segregate them. I should work towards accepting and learning about other people and their cultures. 'Rights' are everybody's and no one should be treated or regarded as different, as all divisions made on perceptions are deficient.

Each and every person was born into this world as a complete equal to every other being with whom they co-exist. But as the world advances, we are slowly creating gaps between 'types' of people and such gaps will take time to bridge. These ideas are the perceived differences between disabled and healthy, black and white, male and female, young and old, rich and poor, weak and powerful etc. But in essence, we are all exactly the same and there's no reason for such concepts to be in our minds at all.

I think human rights are completely natural, and it's not the existence of laws and policies that stop discrimination, it's the ability to feel empathy. It's about realising how to treat people the way you want them to treat you in return. Sometimes these ideas are played with and some unfortunate people make the mistake of breaching other people's human rights and their freedoms.

Here it is important for people who aren't involved to try and step in and work to protect other people and strengthen from within - others and themselves.

But each person, young or old, will probably interpret each human rights issue or concept differently. And maybe living in a relatively safe and secure environment, my ideas might not give an accurate impression of the world and human rights. But the truth probably lies in a joint view of this world, pieced together from each individual thought - indispensable.

This essay provides eloquent insight into issues critical to working with CALD young people: empathy, respect, understanding, plurality and agency.

Culture

Culture is often very difficult to explain, as one word cannot capture its entirety. Francesco and Gold (2005:18) state it is a “set of socially constructed meanings that shape the behaviour of people in a particular society”. Others have described it as a “way of life” of a group of people.

Culture therefore comes in many forms. At the core of culture are what are known as basic assumptions. These may include:

- Shared beliefs
- Shared ideas

Visibility of culture

Culture can be visible through the style and colour of clothing, particular mannerisms employed, and the language used. A study by Thomas and Butcher (2001) focuses on the way in which CALD youth identify each other through clothing, with one respondent stating:

“Well, if you see any Adidas pants walking 500 metres away, you can always tell it's an Arab. If you see someone wearing microfibre clothes, it's an Asian”.

This is known as manifest culture, and provides a certain level of insight into another's culture. However, the extra visibility of CALD young people has assisted in creating a range of racist stereotypes, simply based on a young person's physical appearance or the language they may use. As has been stated previously, stereotypes are unhelpful as they can result in important information being missed or excluded based on pre-conceived ideas about a CALD young person.

Language

Language is a key part of culture, described as a cultural system. The Collins Dictionary (1998: 474) states, “language is a system for the expression of thoughts, feelings...by the use of spoken sounds or conventional symbols” or simply “the language of a particular nation or people”. Gibbs (2002 cited in

Francesco and Gold 2005: 71) estimates that there are between 5,000 to 7,000 languages in the world!

Language both affects and reflects the way a culture thinks. People who therefore speak the same language belong to the same speech community. English is by far the most common auxiliary language in the world, yet as Australia becomes more multicultural and ethnic diversity flourishes, other languages have begun to be more widely utilised.

In some situations, you might be called upon to utilise an interpreter to communicate with CALD background young people or community members. The following is a list of when an interpreter should be utilised:

- The young person is communicating to you in a language other than English
- You do not understand what the young person is saying to you
- A young person's English is unclear
- A young person refuses to communicate with you in English
- You need to intervene in an altercation between young people who do not speak English or do not speak it well
- To provide proper access to appropriate services

Not using an interpreter may lead to:

- Miscommunication between you and the young person
- Frustration experienced by the young person who may think he / she is not being heard
- Unnecessary escalation of the issue / event

Contact **Translating and Interpreting Service** (TIS) if you require the use of an interpreter:

www.immi.gov.au/tis/

Telephone: 131 450

Young People from CALD Backgrounds

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, Census of Population and Housing, Australia's Youth (2059.0) states that:

- In 2001, 15% of 15-24 year olds (or 390,300 persons) were born overseas.
- Australian youth collectively speak in excess of 200 different languages.
- Nearly 16% (417,300) of young people spoke another language apart from English at home.

- Among young people who had both parents born overseas, 19% nominated English as their ancestry, 16% Chinese and 5% Italian.
- Young people who spoke a European language rated their proficiency in English more highly than did those who spoke an Asian or Aboriginal language.

Individual Exercise: Gaining an understanding of the size of the cultural and linguistically diverse background communities in your area will help in understanding the changing demands on the library. Undertake some basic research in your local area to establish the size of the different communities, the percentage of young people (as many new and emerging communities have much younger age structures than the dominant Anglo-Australian community) and the nature of settlement practices.

Challenges facing CALD Young People

Guerra and White (1995: 7-8, 234) have identified a list of challenges that face CALD young people. These include:

- Full participation in wider community affairs
- Access to appropriate services and essential information
- Freedom to express themselves and their identity
- Ethnocentrism (the belief that one's own culture is better than another)
- Racist attitudes and behaviours
- Unequal social and economic distribution of societal resources (which manifest in poverty and unemployment).

Furthermore, research by Butcher and Thomas highlights the social and racial divide evident in public places in Sydney. Results from the study showed that Middle Eastern background youth have become a focal area for security guards and police. Many youth feel that they have been “hassled by security guards and...banned from the mall”.³⁰ Furthermore, they feel segregated and “looked at as if we are shoplifting” and “the object of racialised fears”.³¹ Some suggest that media generated moral panics serve to further these racialised fears, resulting in even greater scrutiny from public and private police.

Groups of CALD young people are most prone to levels of police attention. Young CALD people have reported feeling particularly singled out if they are in groups. Perhaps ironically, for many communities, young people are encouraged to socialise together for their own safety. This is likely to be particularly true for new and emerging communities, where there is no familiarity with the geographical

³⁰ Butcher, M, Thomas, M (2003) *Ingenious, emerging youth cultures in urban Australia*, Pluto Press Australia, Melbourne, p. 117.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 111.

layout of the area in which they have settled, nor a good understanding of safe locations. Consequently, the strategy of encouraging young people from new and emerging communities to stay in groups for safety and protection can be incorrectly perceived by others as being for the purposes of participating in criminal activity. It is in this way that groups of young people are quickly perceived as criminal gangs.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes of CALD young people are not uncommon. Many stereotypes abound. Some have little consequence while others will have considerable repercussions for the young people labelled by the stereotype. Some common stereotypes include:

- All Muslim girls wear headscarfs (Guerra and White 1998: 4)
- Vietnamese students are all good at maths
- African youth are all into dancing
- People from a particular cultural background are all trouble makers
- Youth in groups are gang members and therefore involved in illegal activity, such as drugs etc.
- Young people exhibiting certain behaviours and choices of clothing are thieves

Individual Exercise: To learn more about the experiences of young CALD people, visit the following websites:

- The Migrant Information Centre – www.miceastmelb.com.au/
- The Refugee Council of Australia – www.refugeecouncil.org.au/
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship – www.immi.gov.au/
- The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) – www.startts.org/
- NSW Ethnic Communities Council – www.eccnsw.org.au/

Summary

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be frequent users of libraries in many areas. Learning as much as you can about common cultural backgrounds can help to provide a deeper understanding of ways of providing for the needs of young people in your library. There are many resources and services available to assist you in working with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Section 6: Dealing with Alcohol & Other Drug Intoxication

It is likely that at some stage you will come across young people who are under the influence of an intoxicating substance, which may present a number of challenging behaviours. This section provides some background information on drug and alcohol issues and identifies strategies to effectively respond to and manage young people who are intoxicated in a library context.

Young People and Alcohol and other Drugs

Contrary to popular belief, only a very small percentage of young people aged 12-19 have ever used an illicit drug and an even smaller percentage use illicit drugs on a regular basis. On the other hand a very high percentage of young people aged 12 – 17 have used alcohol and approximately 20% are regular users of alcohol (AIHW 2002).

It is important to understand why young people might choose to use drugs, and to consider this in the context of youth and youth culture. Many people think that young people engage in drug use only if they are experiencing problems and trying to cope with life, however this is not always true. As with many adults, young people associate drinking alcohol and taking drugs with being social, celebrating and having fun. Adolescence is a time of experimentation, looking for belonging, acceptance and identity and being intoxicated can heighten the feeling of belonging to a group whilst having fun.

Other reasons why alcohol and other drugs are used could be that young people:

- Are curious about the effects
- Enjoy the intoxicating effects
- See their peers use drugs
- See their parents and other close relatives consuming alcohol
- Are involved in youth “dance / party scene” where alcohol and other drugs are prevalent
- See alcohol and other drugs as part of the local youth culture
- Are naturally rebellious
- Find there is a lack of recreational attractions that are accessible for them in the local area

There is no one single reason why all young people will use alcohol and other drugs. Individual motivations, situational determinants and previous experience will contribute to episodes of alcohol and other drug use.

Problems Associated with Alcohol and other Drug Use

Drug and alcohol use presents a number of issues for individuals, their families and for society. There are a range of harms associated with using alcohol and other drugs, including:

- Increased risk of contracting blood borne disease such as HIV and Hepatitis B & C through shared needles and unprotected sex
- Other consequences of being involved in unprotected sexual activity, including unwanted pregnancy
- Increased risk of overdose or death
- Drug / alcohol dependence
- Increased mental health problems
- Increased involvement in crime
- Increased risk to violence
- Increased risk of driving under the influence

In the contexts of young people and adolescent development, the added dimension of risk taking and adventurous behaviour elevates young people's potential to other harms considerably. When under the influence of an intoxicating substance, young people tend to be more involved in higher risk taking activity (e.g. driving a car, swimming at night, being involved in crime), which increases the risk of death or serious injury due to accidents.

What drugs do young people use?

In Australia, significant research goes into identifying which substances are being used by school students aged 12-17 years of age. They found that alcohol and tobacco were the most commonly used drugs among this group. The research showed that 78% of students aged 12 and 96% of students aged 17 who were surveyed had ever consumed an alcoholic drink. The research also found that 35% of those aged 16-17 years of age had consumed between 6-8 alcoholic drinks in one episode in the last week.

Other drugs of concern when discussing young people are cannabis, inhalants and amphetamines (speed, ecstasy).

Young people will often use two or three types of drugs at the same time. This is known as poly-drug use. People mix drugs or use more than one drug at the same time because they sometimes balance the effects of one substance by using the other. For example to overcome the stimulating effects of some substances such as MDMA (ecstasy) some people may chose to take a depressant (alcohol) to bring down their mood or energy level to help them sleep.

There are all sorts of issues regarding poly drug use one of which is that the effects of the drugs are less predictable. Also, certain substances increase the effects of others, sometimes resulting in higher or quicker intoxication. In fact death by heroin overdose is more likely when a person has also been drinking heavily and / or using MDMA.

What is Intoxication?

Intoxication is a term used to describe when the consumption of alcohol exceeds a person's level of intoxication resulting in changes in perception, mood, thinking process or motor skills.

At toxic (poison) levels, depending on the substance taken, individuals may become extremely agitated, irrational, impulsive and acutely paranoid, which may lead the person to behave in an aggressive and / or violent manner. At toxic level an individuals behaviour may pose a significant threat to themselves, you and other bystanders.

When dealing with toxic levels of intoxication, the situation and the individual should be viewed as a medical emergency and special precaution should be observed to safely manage the individual. Medical intervention should be considered the first priority for managing these situations.

Intoxication and the associated problems in libraries

Intoxication presents a number of challenges for library personnel, these may include:

- Underage drinking
- Intoxication in a public space
- Engage in more adventurous and risk taking behaviour
- Increased risk of accidents, injury, even death
- Increased risk of overdose / death
- Increased level of aggression or violence
- Increased impulsive crime
- Threatening behaviours due to toxicity

Recognising Intoxication

Intoxication may vary from person to person, depending on the substance/s used, the amount and purity of the drug taken, the persons experience with alcohol and other drugs as well as the overall health of the person.

It is very important to keep in mind that intoxication and the associated symptoms can be confused with other medical conditions such as:

- Brain injury
- Mental health illness
- Shock
- Blood poisoning

It is therefore important to manage all situations presenting with these behaviours as a medical emergency as these conditions could also be life threatening. The best way to deal with this is to call an ambulance.

The following table provides a general list of symptoms associated with common drugs used:

Drug	Effects of Low Dose	Effects of Toxic levels
Depressants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol • Benzodiazapines (valium, Serapax, Tamazepam) • Opiates (heroin, morphine, methadone) • Inhalants (solvents, petrol, glue) • Cannabis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxation, feeling of wellbeing • Less inhibition • Intense mood • Excitability • Euphoria or depression • Quick to anger • Impulsive • Loss of coordination • Slow reflex • Low attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slurred speech • Aggression • Unstable / unsteady on feet • Drowsiness • Nausea / vomiting • Unconsciousness • Possible death
Psychostimulants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphetamines • Methylamphetamine (Ice, base) • Cocaine • MDMA (ecstasy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arousal • High alertness • Mild paranoia • Talkative • Excitable • Euphoria • Insomnia • Anxiety / agitation • Delusional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute paranoia • Aggression • Agitation violence • Seizures (fits) • Severe muscle spasms • Life threatening temperature increase • Stroke • Death

Physical signs may include:

- Increased pupil size
- Hot flushed sweaty skin
- Rapid breathing
- Jerky movements of limbs
- Shaking lower limbs
- Racing pulse
- Jaw clenching
- Body stiffness and rigid limbs

Dealing with Intoxication

As established earlier, managing acute behavioural disturbance due to intoxication is a medical emergency and should be treated as such. Therefore calling an ambulance is your first priority. In situations where a great threat is present, the police should also be called to contain the situation.

However, containing the situation is critical until police or the ambulance arrive. The first thing is the assessment of risk to the individual, bystanders and yourself. Remember, exercising an appropriate duty of care for all involved is critical.

Many libraries have policies and procedures regarding who can enter and who can be excluded from their property. Many of these policies will refer to intoxication. However, situations where you require an intoxicated young person to leave a library may prove to be a challenge. Where the intoxicated person is able to follow directions, it is advised that non-threatening communication techniques should be utilised.

However, where there are visible signs that the young person is highly intoxicated or has consumed toxic levels of alcohol or drugs, regular communication may not be effective, and calling an ambulance is your highest priority. Containing the situation until medical assistance or police arrive is essential.

Managing the situation until the ambulance arrives

Libraries have two main ways to intoxicated persons until medical assistance arrives:

1. Calling the ambulance and or police
2. Use calming communication

When initiating communication, it is important to remember the state of mind the affected person is currently experiencing. Intoxicated individuals will be experiencing acute paranoia, hallucinations, agitation and generally will be physically unwell. Therefore it is important to use calming, non-threatening verbal and non-verbal communication (refer to section 3). Ask simple, open ended questions, for example:

- Have you taken any drugs like speed, ice, coke or have you had too much to drink?

If yes, what did you take? Have you taken any other drugs? When did you take them?

If you have the opportunity, it might be valuable to gain information from the young person's friends or other bystanders. Ask for example:

- What has the individual taken? How much? When did he / she take it?
- Does the individual suffer from a mental illness?

This is important information to relay to ambulance officers when they arrive.

Other things to consider:

- Do not invade “personal space”. It is very easy to feel threatened and to misinterpret situations when intoxicated.
- Be calm and speak slowly and clearly while keeping communications short, simple and to the point. Avoid long-winded explanations. Concentration spans are short when people are intoxicated and memory is impaired.
- Personalise your communications. Be on a first name basis with the young person if you can. Acknowledge their feelings and needs, and try to satisfy any reasonable desires the young person may have.
- Explain that an ambulance is on its way, as this may de-escalate the situation. The young person may be more cooperative if they believe the situation will be dealt with in a medical context.

Individuals under the effect of alcohol and other drugs may not respond to commanding or calming communication techniques. The threat of physical injury to the individual, to bystanders or to yourself may still be an issue despite all efforts at verbal communication. In such situations, it may be attractive to physically handle the intoxicated young person. This is **not recommended**, as restraint may pose serious health risks to the individual, particularly for those who have consumed toxic levels of psychostimulants (speed, ecstasy, ice) and inhalants.

Even where a crime has been committed and you are required to detain the individual until police attend, physical contact should be your last resort and calming, non-threatening communication should be used. If it comes down to physically handling the intoxicated person, special precautions should be observed.

Psychostimulants and inhalants have been linked as a possible risk factor for sudden death for being restrained. It is important to keep in mind that an individual under the influence of psychostimulants or inhalants may be aggressive or violent. They are also at greater risk of adverse health risks including seizures, stroke and heart attack, and restraint or physical contact may exacerbate these conditions (Commonwealth of Australia 2004).

Individual Exercise: The table on the following page lists a number of useful websites that provide enormous amounts of information about alcohol and other drugs. Workers in many areas often feel that they have insufficient knowledge about alcohol and other drugs and therefore feel ill-equipped to deal with situations involving alcohol and other drugs. It is suggested that you review at least a couple of these websites and then periodically refresh your knowledge about these issues.

National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)

<http://ndarvc.med.unsw.edu.au>

Australian Drug Information Network (ADIN)

http://www.adin.com.au/content.asp?Document_ID=39

Register of Australian Drug and Alcohol Research (RADAR)

<http://www.radar.org.au/displayNode.aspx?nodePrefix=00000000000007&index=4>

Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies (ACYS)

<http://www.youthfacts.com.au/index.php?option=displaypage&Itemid=211&op=page>

National Drug Research Institute

<http://www.ndri.curtin.edu.au/index.html>

DrugInfo Clearinghouse

<http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/?gclid=COScwcflrloCFQdZYQodkgOlrg>

NSW Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy

<http://www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au/>

NSW Health

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/drug.html>

The Australian Drug Foundation (ADF)

www.adf.org.au/index.htm

Centre for Youth Drug Studies – within the ADF

www.adf.org.au/cyds/index.html

The Alcohol and Other Drug Council of Australia (ADCA)

www.adca.org.au/

The Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies (NADA)

www.nada.org.au

Drug Arm (This site is particularly focused on youth issues)

www.drugarm.org.au

Summary

The behaviour of young people can be directly influenced by alcohol and other drugs. By being able to differentiate the different effects of drugs, you will be able to better watch for signs of intoxication in your library. Keeping abreast of developments in the alcohol and other drug field will help to prepare you to deal with any relevant issues that emerge in your library.

Section 7: Where to Get Help

The following information on key relevant agencies and services has been provided. Each of these agencies should be able to provide some assistance on specific relevant issues:

Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA)

YAPA is the peak community group working in the interests of young people and youth services in NSW. YAPA has had extensive involvement in public space issues and have wide networks within the youth sector. YAPA can provide advice about strategies to adopt, suggest people to contact for support or assistance or can provide ideas that might have been successful in other locations.

Telephone: (02) 9319 1100

Freecall: 1800 627 323

Website: www.yapa.org.au

Email: info@yapa.org.au

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) develops policy, advises government, undertakes research and educates people about the needs of children and young people. CCYP has developed a number of useful resources, including *Taking PARTicipation Seriously*, a guide to involving young people in making decisions that affect their lives.

Telephone: (02) 9286 7276

Website: www.kids.nsw.gov.au

Foundation for Young Australians

The Foundation for Young Australians is an independent national grant-making organisation, funding and working in partnership with youth-led initiatives which aim to positively contribute to young people and their communities. The Foundation's website is a great source of information about young people across Australia.

Telephone: (03) 9670 5436

Website: www.youngaustralians.org/

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) was founded by a group of eminent experts and organisations in reaction to increasingly worrying trends in the wellbeing of Australia's young people. By using the latest information technology to span the distances of the nation ARACY has become a broker of collaborations, a disseminator of ideas and an advocate for Australia's future generation.

Website: www.aracy.org.au/

Children's Legal Service, NSW Legal Aid Commission

The Children's Legal Service operates across NSW. The Service employs solicitors who work in Children's Courts and represent young people in other courts. The Service also operates a legal advice helpline, which enables young people to receive legal advice from appropriately trained solicitors most hours of the day / week / year.

Helpline Phone Number: 1800 101810

Ethnic Communities Council of NSW

The Ethnic Communities Council of NSW (ECC) is a non-government peak body representing many organisations and people from the multicultural community in NSW. The ECC's primary roles are advocacy, education and community development. The ECC actively promotes the principles of multiculturalism, and lobbies for the development of culturally inclusive society.

Telephone: (02) 9319 0288

Website: www.eccnsw.org.au

Y-Space Website

The Queensland University of Technology created and maintains the Y-Space website, which is a clearinghouse of publications, articles and information about public space projects. The website is an excellent resource and the information contained on the website can promote thinking about different, innovative ways to tackle public space problems.

Website: www.yspace.net/

Youth.NSW

Youth.NSW is the NSW Government's website for young people and workers in the youth field. The site aims to provide people aged 12 to 25 with links to New South Wales Government, community services and information. It also contains a range of information for young people about getting involved in their community through programs and events. The site is a forum for youth participation and for government to hear young people's ideas on a range of issues.

Website: www.youth.nsw.gov.au/

The Source

The Source is a Commonwealth government youth website which provides information on a range of issues relevant to young people. The Source is a good website to stay in touch with latest programs and developments affecting young people. It provides regular updates on Youth Week activities and other relevant initiatives.

Website: www.thesource.gov.au/

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