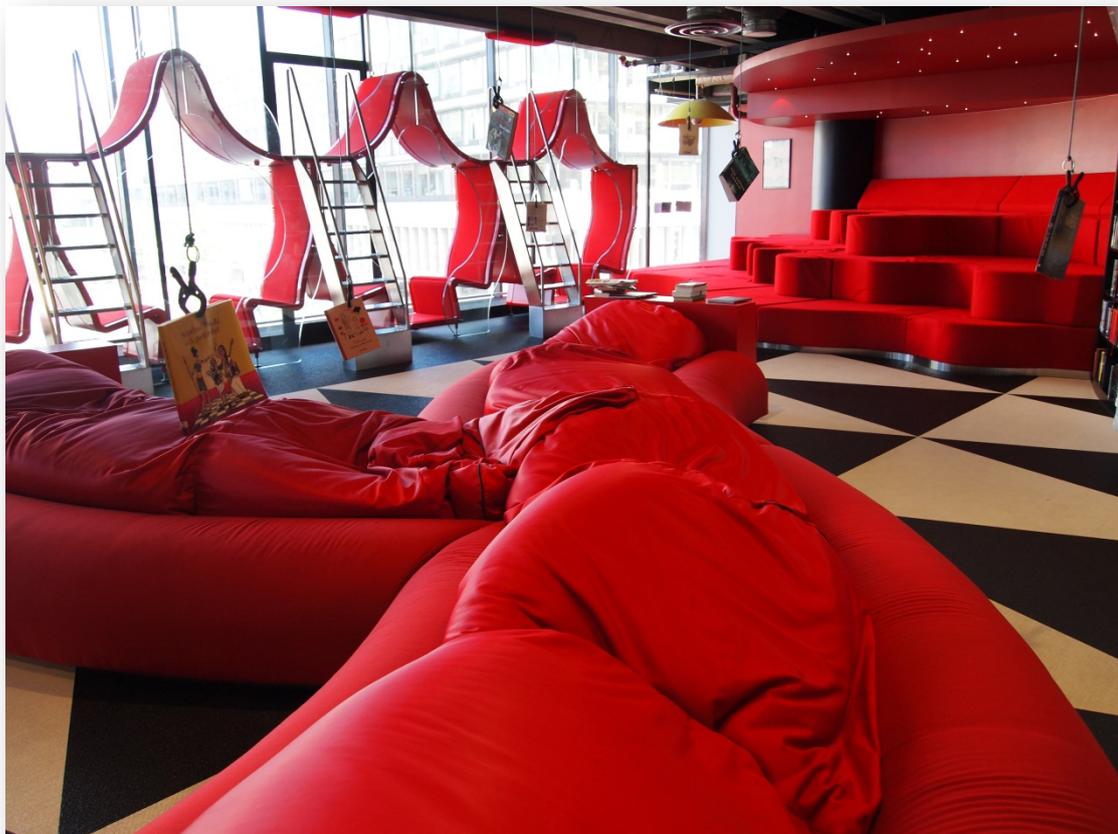


**Breaking Down Barriers:
Engaging Young Adults by Creating a “Geography of
Yes!” in Public Libraries**



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Barrett Reid Scholarship 2011

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Introduction

No matter the country, no matter the area of academic or social research, young adults have always been part of popular debate, discussion and policy making (Hopkins, 2010). As a demographic that isn't entirely as independent as adults nor as dependent as children, young adults are often times over-looked (if not entirely misunderstood). As the public library sector goes through its own evolution with regard to its relationship to the communities it serves, so too has it looked afresh at the importance of young adults within its service provision. Where previously there has been a strong focus on literacy in the earlier years of an individual's development and the recurring school holiday-based activities for 'tweens' and teenagers, growth in the recognition of the importance of the young adult demographic has led to an evolution in how libraries approach, perceive and advocate for young adults. As an example, in the last decade and a half there has been a shifting trend which sees an increase in the number of young adult dedicated spaces with libraries envisioning their virtual and actual spaces as an alternative third place for young adults.

Ray Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place*, defines a "third place" as an informal meeting place or location after home, school or work which acts as an anchor in daily life encouraging social, creative and civic interaction that helps the individual establish feelings of a sense of place (1999). Oldenburg writes "These places serve community best to the extent that they are *inclusive* and *local*" (xvii, 1999). He establishes key factors to define a space as third place. They include:

- Individually managed, free or inexpensive and entertaining
- Availability of food and drink (though not essential)
- Accessible (walking distance, public transport nearby)

- Having “regulars” using the space
- Unites the neighbourhood: being welcoming and comfortable
- Assimilation: offering the chance to meet new and old friends and bridging age divides

However, in the vast majority of communities, young adults find themselves excluded from older adult third places such as the pub or work place. Oftentimes, the ability to access possible third places which are welcome to young people fails because of financial, parental or transport constraints. Considering those constraints, there is no doubt public libraries can be a third place for young adults. The necessity of creating and designing library spaces which act as a third place for young adults is essential to any community’s social capital. The term “social capital” has been defined as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995). Young adults have a significant role in a community’s social capital and the library can act as an institution of trust, to facilitate this process (Saad, 2011). The library helps to bridge a relationship between young adults and the broader community. As evident in some of the libraries documented below, public libraries have been adopting a service ethos which sees young adults as key stakeholders, and just as deserving of services and spaces as children and adult library users have always been. In countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, and in cities across the US, libraries are being refurbished, renovated or purpose-built with the young adult library patron in mind. Spaces such as those visited during the study tour are a few examples of the increasing global awareness of the importance of young people within a community. Without young people’s stories (encompassing their ideas, their innovations, their opinions and their input) the narrative which connects and binds a community will inevitably weaken over time.

Since the 1990s research regarding young adults and the spaces within public libraries has slowly grown thanks largely in part to Dr Anthony Bernier, a former librarian now academic in California. Despite his passion and interest in this area, the collective body of research remains comparably small to other areas of interest within the public library sector. Through journal publications, collaborations with public library services in Los Angeles and Oakland, California, conference presentations, editorials and other major academic publications, Dr Bernier has spent years encouraging librarians to understand the necessity of young adults specific spaces within public libraries. During his research he coined the term “The Geography of No” to describe those library spaces which displayed a negative discourse within library design showing young adults that their presence was unwanted and discouraged (Bernier, 1998). He explained that “The Geography of No” communicates to young people that harmless, age appropriate behaviours are unacceptable, such as “no food or drinks”, “only one person to a computer or chair”, “no conversing in a group” as a few examples. These “no’s” only serve to undermine the trust, sense of belonging and place attachment young people need to develop in order to use the library as a third place. To be able to define a library as having a “Geography of Yes” is to be able to establish that it is a space which expresses not only young adult specific spatial development and design, but also articulates positive values and behaviours toward young adults from library staff and the library as an organisation. Library spaces which have a “Geography of Yes” are places that engage young people via the space, through participation, creation and services; and, through that engagement these spaces encourage the building of long-term relationships between the two. The three summarised testimonies of young adult users of the Oakland libraries (Appendices A, B and C), are specific examples of how the Oakland libraries have

left positive impressions on young adults in that community. The positive impact is due to the high level of engagement between the service, its young adult community via the Youth Leadership Council (YLC), and in collaboration with Dr Bernier and his research for designing youth friendly library spaces.

Australian public libraries, Melbourne Library Service included, have begun to enact practices in design and service which make young adults the focus of service provision. The change process has relied strongly on youth librarians communicating to the broad range of library stakeholders the importance and value of the young adult population. However, in contrast to what was observed in Oakland, California, Denmark or Sweden, Australian public libraries have much to change and improve in order to institute and enact a “Geography of Yes!” The following document is the culmination of four months spent researching spaces which express a “Geography of Yes” and spaces which have not quite succeeded. It also contains references to conversations with Dr Bernier, other library professionals and young adults. The original research had hoped to find libraries which supported and serviced young adults between the ages of 16 and 24. However, much like in Australia, the assumed age range of young adults was 12-18 (teenagers and or high schoolers). It was observed early on in the study tour that once the young adults reach the age of 18 staff indicated there was no further distinction between them and older adults. Because of this fact, the focus of the research shifted. Instead of a singular focus on 16-24 year olds in public libraries, it became a focus on the way in which the spaces, programs, ideologies, philosophies and behaviours within public libraries either encouraged or discouraged young adult participation and usage. There are examples in this document which refer to tweens (those children aged 9 to 12, sometimes 13 year olds), high schoolers and programs meant for children. These

references are made in order to illuminate a particular library service's perspective regarding the importance of their community members, the values and ideologies they hold which informs their practice and the narratives and discourse they enact on a daily basis. It is not to deter from the age range as originally proposed for this research, but to enhance the reader's understanding of best-practices observed abroad which helped to determine if a library space articulated a "Geography of Yes" (or not) for its young adults.

Background

The bulk of the investigation for the Barrett Reid Scholarship has been to discover and reveal the nuances around how public libraries have captured and articulated design, practice and service into their spaces with special regard to young adults. From these revelations I hoped to then see how those nuances reflected a stronger or bettered engagement with the library's young adult community—its interactions, participation and co-creation. The way in which I wanted to view, observe, and gather evidence around public library spaces was by determining whether or not a library space has a "Geography of Yes" in its overall layout, construction and architecture. However, during the study tour it became clear that there was no singular formula or set of guidelines to follow to create a "Geography of Yes" within a public library space. Instead, it was discovered that the "Geography of Yes" varies just as cultures do and were just as unique as the individual young adults engaging with those library spaces. The ways in which I did attempt to determine whether a space articulated a "Geography of No" or a "Geography of Yes" was therefore based upon Dr Bernier's assessment of libraries he observed in the US which had "The Geography of No". The guidelines around "The Geography of No" acted as a counter point to help determine the spaces which expressed a "Geography of Yes".

Much of the research is based on evidence gathered through photographic documentation, meetings with staff, young adults, academics and professionals connected to public libraries. The results are strongly influenced by my experience of the space as it was introduced to me, and also by the people I met, and the particular day, hour or week. The observations can only speak for the time I occupied the space and the opinions expressed by the library staff with whom I spoke. I visited purpose-built libraries and ones which were renovated, pre-existing spaces. I observed libraries with youth space designed by young adults themselves, and spaces where a collection of “teen-specific” reads was the only delineation between the children’s and adult’s spaces. I observed the use of young adult dedicated space within a public library and observed those libraries which didn’t have youth dedicated space, but where young adults were visible *everywhere*. Each library visited had evidence of efforts being made to service and support young adults. Each library service had its own way of managing this support and advocacy. Some managed this through programs, partnerships and collaboration running throughout the year; others, by creating environments where the entirety of the library space was inclusive for all of the community’s residents. Some libraries, like TioTretton in Stockholm, provided a library space where adults (excepting staff) were prohibited, and others, had active youth councils (see Appendix A for Student 1’s testimony as a member of the Oakland Public Library’s YCL) or working, paid young adults providing ideas and coordinating events, as evident with MindSpot in Arhus, Denmark.

Evidence supporting this research was gathered during a study tour in Europe (via the US) from April to September of 2012. The data gathered was part of a desire to capture best practice from public libraries. The initial list of libraries to visit was based upon information from an architecture website (LibraryInfo, 2012). Specificity was given

to countries which were not generally well-researched or regularly featured in the daily discourse of public library space. There was an intentional avoidance of all too prominent countries such as the UK and Canada, as research from these countries is regularly produced. However, there was certainly value in spending time in those libraries which do have reputations preceding them, such as DOK, Delft in Netherlands and Arhus in Denmark. This choice was made in order to give the research depth, and in order to have the narrative include the expected and the unexpected. The following is an attempt to articulate my findings and an attempt to express not just the physical representations of those findings, but also the narrative around the politics of libraries and the relationship public libraries have with their respective communities and citizens, especially young adults.

Why Young People and Library Space?

During an interview in Amsterdam for *This Week in Libraries* Jaap van de Geer asked “Why is it important to bring teens into the library...why does it matter?” (TWIL #75, 2012). Young people matter because they add value to a community and their stories, their ideas and their creations matter. Ultimately, “[w]e owe strong, proactive, well-funded libraries to young people...because [they] are citizens of our communities and are entitled to them. We owe them strong libraries because they are our young people and we love them” (Bernier, 2003). Building library spaces which cater to, support and encourage young adult engagement and participation is fundamental to their library experience, and that experience begins from the moment s/he steps into a new library space. In that moment, an impression is made and meaning is created from what was once an abstract concept or an unknown. Those impressions become points of reference which link the library to the individual either in a positive manner or in a negative

manner. When the architecture and design of a library fails to articulate to its young adult users a narrative of openness, accessibility and inclusivity, then opportunities for them to have a positive experience diminish. It is expected that libraries should evolve and sustain themselves to remain attractive and interesting to young adults by being designed and built in such a way as to bring young people in through the doors. Even with a fairly standard, minimalist or simple exterior design, young people will utilise a place as long as the internal space, or the content of a library, meets their needs. When a building and the spaces contained within are unable to attract young people then that library service must be willing to accept there is an underlying narrative which may be contrary to creating a user-friendly, user-centric library. There must be a willingness for self-evaluation and for change which will ultimately lend the library to expressing and articulating to its public and its young adult users that “yes, this space truly is for you and yes this space provides experiences beyond the book.”

The “Geography of Yes” is not necessarily just the architecture and design of a space, but encompasses spaces and places which communicate “yes” to its users through the content, be it user-driven collection materials, or staff whose behaviours and attitudes speak a language of welcome to everyone who enters. Student 3 (Appendix C) spoke with me about his library experience and stated that it was Brian, the youth librarian at the Oakland main library, who helped to make him feel welcome in that space and encouraged him to regularly use the library. Library staff are an integral part of the content of a library space and effect whether a space has a “Geography of Yes” or not. From positive experiences in public library spaces young adults will create bonds between themselves, the space and the staff who work in the libraries. The result is the growth of a love of place, or topophilia. In 1974 Yi Fu Tuan, a humanist geographer,

wrote the book, *Topophilia: a Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* which discussed the way people develop love of place and people's attitudes, perceptions and values toward their environment. Tuan defines topophilia as "the affective bond between people and place or setting. Diffuse as concept, vivid and concrete as personal experience" (1974). The library as a place or setting has the opportunity to create personal experiences for young adults. Many libraries do this successfully and in varying ways—through attraction via architecture and design, voluntary or work experience opportunities, partnerships with other youth organisations, support services and the most basic understanding of what a library contains: its collection content. If designers, architects and library staff can grasp and articulate this sense of place, thus implementing an experience, then young adults will be able to perceive the library as valuable and necessary in their everyday lives.

Ultimately, each community of young adults has different needs, and by recognising and addressing those needs, a public library gives itself the chance to remain relevant. Oakland Public Library in California offered an in depth opportunity with regard to visiting designated youth spaces. Along with the chance to visit four branches, I spoke with three young adults from a local high school in Oakland who regularly use the Main Library. These students come from different ethnic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. At the heart of their interviews was the sacredness with which they viewed the public library, the TeenZone (the name of the youth dedicated space) and the staff who worked within it. Their perceptions of the library are as unique as their experiences (see Appendices A,B, and C).

Public Library Observations- The United States

Many of the libraries visited upheld a practice which gave young adults (mostly younger teenagers up to 18 years old) a space of their own within the broader layout of the library. Most commonly, the spaces presented younger teenagers hanging out on couches, doing homework, chatting with each other, reading books or gaming.

Sometimes there was a sheet of glass separating the space from the rest of the library; sometimes it was a big wall with a doorway through which to walk; at times there were security guards on duty, and at other times it was just a staff member or two sitting around a computer or information desk. For the most part, the space allocated for young people was significantly smaller than what had been allocated to children and adult patrons. These spaces were either articulating aspects of the “Geography of Yes” or were on the way to achieving the “Geography of Yes”. The following are descriptions which give an account of those American public libraries.

Oakland, California

Oakland Public Library: a library professional’s perspective

1. 81st Avenue branch
2. Cesar Chavez branch
3. Rockridge branch
4. TeenZone at the Main Library

Over the course of a day, Dr Anthony Bernier, associate professor of library science at San Jose State University, accompanied me on a tour of four of Oakland’s libraries. The 81st Street branch was one of the two purpose built libraries. The other two library spaces took already existing space within the library and transformed the allocated sections into that branch's “TeenZone”. Uniformity amongst the branches was found in the usage of the title “TeenZone” to inform users of the spatial intent, but aside from this

commonality, each branch was treated individually based on the characteristic of its neighbourhood and the residents of the community. Instead of treating the library as a single entity, Oakland recognised the unique nature and depth of character each locale had and chose to cater it to the local demographic need.

81st Avenue Branch:

This public library is a shared space with the local primary school. It was built in order to support both library users and the adjacent students. The



TeenZone developed in this branch reflects Dr Bernier's "bedroom effect" (Bernier, 1998). The bedroom effect is an aesthetic way of designing and organising space. As seen in the photos there were posters decorating the walls, art by young people on display, movable furniture in bright colours with multiple levels and heights across the diverse range of sofas, swivel chairs, desks, table tops, and the tiered platforms located in the corner of the space. The office of the youth librarian had ironic signs prohibiting young adults from entering the space, with a window looking into the office showing off a space which mirrored the bedroom effect. Young people came and went from the office even though there wasn't a librarian on duty at the time. This behaviour reflects values of openness, mutual trust and camaraderie between library staff and its teen patrons.



There were specific design features worth mentioning, such as the multi-levelled ceiling tiles which acted to buffer sound, limiting noise travelling beyond the TeenZone. Also, the bookshelves were on wheels thus allowing for flexibility in collection layout whilst giving staff and service providers the ability to cater to certain programs or events which may require open, larger floor space.

Cesar Chavez Branch:

The Cesar Chavez branch, located in a multi-purpose built square near a main BART station, is technically a "shop front" library (though its entrance was not at the time very obvious). The TeenZone



is located in close proximity to the main circulation desk and opens to the library. The space is defined not by physical boundaries but characterised by the posters on the wall, young adult-specific furniture, design, and collection arrangement. There was intentional

design to distinguish the young adult collection from the rest of the library by using black shelving. However, the popularity of the black shelving was such that it was decided to make the majority of the shelving in the other areas of the library black as well. This choice undermines the value of having youth specific design in the TeenZone. So, to create some sort of individuality in what was meant to be a delineation between adult and young adult shelving, the librarians then used comic book character posters, action movies and other pop-culture related images to line the back of the shelves.



What this design choice did was create a stronger sense of youth culture and reinforce the bedroom effect amongst the books, not just on the walls. This TeenZone, like the others in Oakland, utilised tiered platforms to accommodate the many ways young people use furniture and the floor when gathering together. The furniture was created to be easily moved and carried by young adults allowing freedom of expression and movement which is developmentally appropriate to this demographic.

Rockridge Branch:

The Rockridge Branch library is an affluent area located amongst a busy strip of shops and cafés on the main street of Rockridge, nearer to Berkley than San Francisco. This purpose-built library building was a collaborative process between the public and



the library. Despite the public’s involvement, or perhaps because of it, this public library is an example of a space in which the youth area seems an afterthought rather than a pre-requisite at the time of design and building. The TeenZone is a narrow and long room. The furniture is functional and utilitarian. The space does not discourage engagement; however, it still has its limitations such as the amount of space allocated for young adults compared to the rest of the library.



As was observed during this study tour, and is common in Australian public library floor plans, dedicated “young adult” areas are consistently smaller than children’s and adult areas. For various reasons, the

ratio of space within a public library tended toward smaller areas for young adults. This trend is one which deserves examination and innovation. The process of creating a “Geography of Yes” includes such subtle choices as the amount of floor space given to each demographic. Thus, it is easy for libraries to unintentionally create geographies of no. It follows that the allocation of space for young adults can affect young adult feelings of welcome. The process of allocating space for each user group in a library should be determined not only by statistics from the community, but also from projected and or assumed usage by young adults. At the core of this issue is that libraries owe it to their young adult constituents to offer spaces just as large, entertaining and engrossing as children’s areas.

The Main Library:

Having already seen this branch through the eyes of Student 2 (Appendix B), the opportunity to view, observe and critique the space through the eyes of one of the original consultants in development, Dr Bernier, was welcomed. The first viewing



occurred on a weekday, around 3pm, and this second visit was on a Saturday afternoon. There were young people using the space on both occasions but the numbers and the atmosphere was different during each. During the first visit it was observed there were a number

of youth of varying ages reading, talking, hanging out or doing work. The staff member on duty played music from the computer loud enough to fill the space but not be

overwhelming or intrusive. During the Saturday visit, comparatively, the space was fairly quiet with less activity aside from a tutoring session and a few students using the study spaces. There were finer details of the space which were not as obvious during the first visit with Student 2 as she wouldn't have known the specifics of the space's development and its subsequent intended use; therefore, the second experience of walking through this TeenZone was far more critical.



Dr Bernier pointed out that many of the design features such as wall decorations or the curving countertops were designed intentionally with specific purpose in mind. Instead, he remarked that those design features were not being used in the best manner possible or in the way the young people involved in its design had anticipated. One example is a large, wall-sized map of the world.



He had thought there would be an interactive experience whereby young people shared where they had lived or visited by marking the map opening a dialogue around their stories and experiences; however, the map currently acts simply as wall paper. Another example was the curved countertop located predominantly in the centre of TeenZone. It was intended for study or other student activities, but instead this area was being used as a location for displaying informative advertising material such as community gatherings, poetry slams and career advice. These anecdotes about intended spatial usage versus how a space is engaged with by its users expose an important facet of the “Geography of Yes” which is the influence staff have on the library space. This is important because it is essential for librarians and library stakeholders to remember that young adult engagement does not start and stop at the planning stages of a project, program event or building of a library, but needs to remain an active part of the library experience in order to keep the young adult voice relevant. Further, a young adult space may be visually appealing, but if staff override or undermine young adult decisions or assume their needs, then previous steps being taken to create a “Geography of Yes” are wasted. For further description of this library branch refer to Student 2’s summary in Appendix B.

Chicago, Illinois

YouMedia- an integrative teen

space:



The Harold Washington Library Center is one of 52 branches in the Chicago Public Library network. The whole of this central library branch

is colossal. It utilises an escalator system to connect the nine floors which make up this building. There are fountains, large, atrium-style ceilings to allow natural light in, gallery spaces, museum exhibitions, and a second floor dedicated solely to children's services. In 2009 it opened a young adult-centric space called YouMedia. YouMedia has two entrances: one from State Street and the other from within the main library. Most young people enter via the street entrance. I visited YouMedia around two o'clock when high schools were still in session, which was the preference of the staff as they would be busy with young people later in the afternoon. Even at that hour, a handful of young adults were using the space; and as the hour passed, YouMedia began to fill with more young people.



A security guard monitored those who entered via the library entrance. This guard checked the ID of users suspected of being over 18 and was in place to ensure the safety of users and staff. At its inception, YouMedia had teething issues which arose such as interpersonal conflicts and young people whose behaviours were inappropriate for the setting. As the first year and a bit passed those young people who were not interested in using the space to its maximum capacity (to co-create, engage, produce, perform and participate with the librarians and the space’s technological offerings) dropped out. The young adults who remained became the core of users—the ones who chose to use the space for what it was truly offering: a unique, user-centric service supporting creation, production and performance with information and literacy support at the heart of its service (Austin, 2011). Upon first entering it was clear the space was open and vast compared to the other spaces I had observed in California. It was longer than it was wide with linoleum flooring and large windows allowing a significant amount of light to enter from the street side.



Below is a description of YOUMedia:

The center...has a floor plan that is loosely based on these three ways of interacting with media. The activity at the center is designed to encourage young people to move along a continuum of engagement, from “messaging around,” to “geeking out.” The boundaries are intentionally kept fluid, to allow the students to find their own way of interacting with the technology and their peers” (New Learning Institute, 2012).

The entirety of the space was designed to be fluid and reflect continuity in usage as per the above quote. There was very little to distinguish one interactive area from another. The graphic novel, talking book, fiction and non-fiction collections are not massive considering the size of the space; however, graphic novels, manga and talking books account for the majority of the collection as these items were the most popular. The content within YouMedia was more digital and technological than book-based, but the intention of its content was to focus on the varied aspects of learning and knowledge building. The space housed many forms of hardware, software and equipment to allow young people access to tools which enable them to create, learn and engage with each other, library staff, mentors and at times with the broader community as they bring to fruition their creative endeavours. In addition to text-based content, there were laptops for borrowing, consoles to play video games, Apple desktop computers, music equipment and art supplies on offer. Due to the success and popularity of this space there has been funding offered in order to replicate the philosophical design in other public libraries across the US.

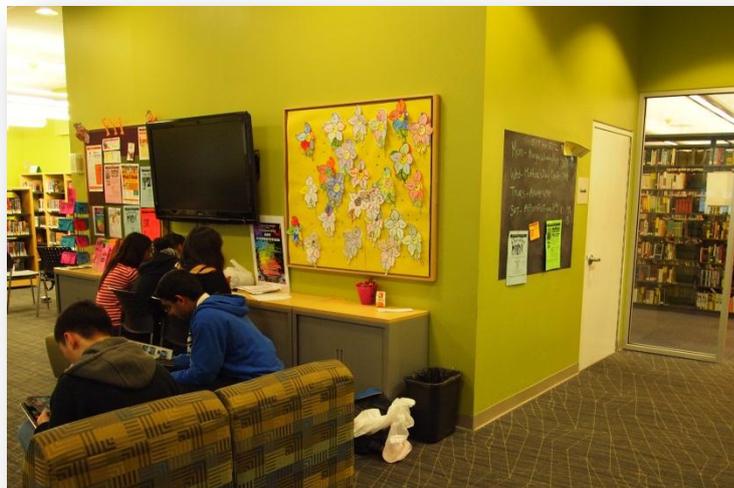
Flushing, Queens, New York

Queens Library- a local community's hub:

It is worth mentioning the time of arrival in Flushing was just after schools had finished for the day. The central branch is located at the epicentre of this area of Queens, on the corner of two very busy



streets: Main Street and Roosevelt Street. On this particular day, there was a rally in support of librarians and public libraries. For these three reasons, the library was quite busy. People filled the library, many of them high school students, with not a single floor containing unused space. Located on the second floor, in the back left corner of this library there is a relatively small area dedicated as teen space. Similar to YouMedia, the space is meant mostly for young people to the age of 18, but unlike in Chicago, there is no security guard to control admittance. At only three years old, this “Teens” room was full of young people. Most of the students sat in groups using their phones, gathered on the floor or crowded around tables with homework, papers and notebooks spread across traditional and non-traditional work areas. Some of the young men browsed the graphic novel collection which lined the wall just near the entrance. It was immediately apparent there was not enough room to match the popularity of the space.



Prior to being a young adult space, this was a staff room. However, demand from the community suggested a dedicated young people’s space needed to be built. The two librarians, who worked solely in this dedicated space, have both been there from its

inception. They welcomed the development because previously there was no “teen” area, despite the library’s proximity to numerous schools and the fact that it is the main, central branch for Flushing. Their interpretation of the space was:

What Worked

1. Numerous power points for users to charge technological gear
2. Plenty of seating space including couches, chairs, diner-style tables and bucket benches with a carpeted floor for those who want to lounge on the floor
3. An increase in attendance at programs and events being run as a result of an increased number of users of this space
4. Relationship between library staff and young adults is better than before the space existed
5. Dedicated staff: four regular youth librarians rotate between this space and the information desk
6. Movable shelves with adjusted levels within them with furniture being light weight and re-design friendly

What Wasn’t Working Well

1. Prohibition of food and drink (the young adults still keep food and drinks in their bags and sneak a bite or sip)
2. Furniture selected for space was not purchased in terms of longevity or in consideration of young adult usage. As a result, it has degraded quickly
3. Attempted introduction of sound pods above the diner style table as waste of budget—they aren’t used for listening anymore and don’t limit sound as they were marketed to do (more a trendy addition than a sustainable technology)
4. Noise travels easily from the space outward into the study areas nearby on the floor: location issue or sound buffering issue
5. Collection is minimal due to limited space as well as a budget freeze
6. Limited space

Further, there was a sense that the young people don't have co-ownership of the space, which was made clear with the guidelines regarding their behaviour and the restrictions in place. Despite these rules, which reflect an institutional value that young people are essentially irresponsible or careless with property and space, the two librarians attested to the strong interaction and engagement between the library, its staff and the young adult community. For some of these young people, this young adult specific space has become their third place. By showing their young people there is a permanent and ongoing intention to engage with them via the creation of dedicated space, the young people in turn responded through interactivity and participation with the space and with the library youth programs.





Rotterdam Public Library

Public Library Observations- Europe

Continental shift- a Dutch Perspective

The specific Dutch libraries visited were Bibliotheek Kennermerwaard in Heerhugowaard, De Nieuwe Bibliotheek in Almere, Rotterdam Central Library, DOK Library and Concept Center in Delft, Openbare Bibliotheek (OBA) in central Amsterdam and one of the branch libraries, OBA in Osdorp just west of Amsterdam city centre. Each had a unique look, feel and approach to the public library experience. They all enacted various practices which define the term library. There was a focus on books, collections of music and movies, the ability to access Internet and WIFI, to read or study on comfortable furniture or inversely at simple, wooden tables. The spaces allowed for play and exploration as well as for sitting quietly in contemplation, study or work. Each library told its own story, instilled its own values and expectations and the staff who worked within those libraries reinforced, supported and continue to develop those narratives and values.

In a few of the Dutch libraries there were pre-existing young adult areas (OBA-Osdorp, Rotterdam Central, and De Nieuwe Bibliotheek in Almere), areas in progress

(DOK and OBA-Amsterdam) and spaces which were developed especially *by* the young people in collaboration with the library (Bibliotheek Kennermerwaard). The majority of the spaces (excepting Bibliotheek Kennermerwaard) enacted traditional and expected behaviours with regard to their young adult library patrons. The librarians created spaces in collaboration with architects and designers on behalf of the people who were to use it. The resulting creations reflected the perspective of the *adults* involved in the process. The values the space expressed, the system the space enacted and the behaviours the space imposed on its users pre-determined and directed how a person could interact with it. The original intention of the space may not have been thus, but over time due to the traditional values and core beliefs of staff some of the spaces slowly shifted from being dynamic and interesting to being stagnant, static designs which showed wear and low, if any, usage. As a counter-point, one can refer to Oakland's TeenZones to see that part of their success was the involvement of the YLC when developing the youth spaces.

There arose a correlation between spaces which enabled young adult participation, co-creation and co-ownership of them and a strong relationship between staff, the library and those young adults. There was also a correlation between spaces which reaffirmed and asserted power structures between library staff and young adults. Authoritative systems were reinforced, which dictated certain behavioural outcomes and discouraged young adults' use of such spaces in their free time. It is imperative for all public libraries to remain aware of their spaces in order to prevent a once dynamic space becoming stale. It has been shown time and again that user-centred systems are far more adept at sustaining its purpose to the community (Strong Bright Hearts & The Municipality of Aarhus, 2008).

DOK Delft

DOK Library and Concept Centre is a library with a reputation preceding it. Over the last few years it has been at the heart of much of the innovation and development of new technologies and ways of using library space



happening in Netherlands due in part to DOKLAB. The external aspect of the building itself is in contrast to much of the heritage architecture throughout the centre of Delft.

With large windows and a more contemporary style of architecture, it is inviting and suggests to those who pass by to pause and look through into the vast expanse of the ground floor of the library, the eye directed inward to what is happening. Immediately viewed is the canary yellow information desk and other bright colours leading toward an atrium space which reveals to the viewer even more windows helping to brighten the interior. A commonality amongst the newer constructed libraries visited on this study tour, particularly in Europe, was the use of large windows and multiple panes of glass to allow transparency, filtration of natural light and for some these windows acted as a way of gathering and conserving energy as part of an environmental design. An additional outcome is that open and transparent exteriors minimise perceived exclusivity or the community and its visitors.



Inside, there was a prominent information desk located on the ground floor along with the bulk of the adult collection and a large central staircase—used as tiered seating for those wanting to gather under the ceiling windows or

when presentations are being given to a large group—connected this area to the first floor leading to a multimedia collection, reading and work tables and other furniture on which to lounge. Once on the first floor, there is a cafe and a well-developed, brightly designed children’s area with special rooms and play places integrated into the collection. An art gallery, exhibition space, and creative work area is located on this floor as well.



Overall, the look of this space is modern with bold colours and a user-centric layout and design. The collection was organised thematically with special areas that focussed on the more popular sections of the collection, like the red and pink room which housed all the romance books. In this way, the whole of the space acted as an integrative one and encouraged the serendipity of book browsing. The availability of



various types of furnishings on which to lounge and sit acted to encourage people to spend longer periods of time in the library space. The integration of the café, gallery, browseable collections much like a

book store with plenty of sitting options and an abundance of natural light are all aspects which define the entirety of this library space as one having a “Geography of Yes”.

Whilst touring this library it became clear there was not, as seen in the US, an area demarcated for young adults. During discussions regarding this difference, it was explained that the whole of the library was seen as a space which supports young adult users, and any specific support for them was minimal as the focus was more acutely on children. However, in the last year or so, with a change of staff and a change in attitude toward young adults, DOK has had a shift in philosophy. With this new philosophy there is a process of redesign and renovation happening adjacent to the children’s area. Some of the specific stylistic choices for the young adult space included shelves on wheels to allow for opening the space during events and programs. This flexibility in design is a marked improvement from the typical, static shelving. The DOK young adult space will eventually house collections appropriate to this age range including graphic novels, fiction, magazines and talking books. New to the library was the partnership between DOK Delft and a local youth organisation. By co-locating



an information desk adjacent to the young adult area, DOK was taking steps to better express a “Geography of Yes” in this library. The information desk is staffed by professional youth workers during core hours who service young people and their information needs regarding health, housing, education, careers and sex. The Delft community has experienced a rise in the number of young adults from non-Dutch speaking backgrounds. As a result, this information desk has been a momentous partnership giving young adults unaware of the workings of Dutch bureaucracy or too intimidated to speak with other adults, a chance to access information they may otherwise be excluded from. Not only via spatial redesign and adding young adult specific collections, DOK has added value to its library space by providing age appropriate support services.

**Public Library of Kennemerwaard,
Heerhugowaard**

The Public Library of Kennemerwaard in Heerhugowaard, just under 50kms north of Amsterdam, is space shared between the library, the council/mayoral offices, civic administration and an art gallery all



within a single building. Located in a popular shopping district, this building stands out: large panels of glass and sheets of metal combine to make a modern, bold architectural statement. A fountain, and several bicycle stands create a feeling of welcome around the complex. Just inside the main entrance an information desk for the library was located

near a hydraulic lift which lowers a set of stairs when the library is open to the public. There is also an elevator which can be accessed from the information desk as an alternative point of entry. The intention of the hydraulic stair case was to allow for the rest of the building, which houses the gallery and other citizen's services, to be open even when the library is not. This flexibility in design enables the building to be used beyond conventional practices. Structurally, the bulk of the library was connected by panes and panels of glass, allowing as much natural light to filter into it. The use of glass was a recurring design motif which expressed narratives of openness and transparency, both literally and philosophically.

Whilst walking through this space it was very clear that the library as an organisation was enacting practices which see the citizen as centric to its services. It was not just in the library design itself, but also with regard to the government and civic administration area adjacent to the library. Those offices also had open design and were constructed predominantly of glass. Further, the story behind the development of the public library space was one of collaboration between the community, architects, librarians and designers. Without the input of the children, young adults and adults of the community, this library space would not speak such a strong "Geography of Yes". That collaboration saw the community's ideas coming to fruition, especially with regard to the areas for children and young adults. As a result, the library as an institution has removed the hierarchy of power that previously had formed public library spaces. The librarian as the knowledge holder and knowledge giver no longer exists and instead is replaced with the librarian as a guide to help the process of information seeking, co-creation, co-participation and performance.



The young adult space, created as an addition to the adult floor (the children's area takes up two floors) was designed with young people who had outgrown the children's area. They were a small group who had been active participants in the 'Library of 100 Talents' which is based on the Reggio Emilia approach to learning (Bertrams, 2008). An example of this philosophy in action is a Dutch video with English subtitles that have young people talking about their library (WMatthewRogers, 2011). The 'Library of 100 Talents' is a philosophy, a library life-style and design choice, which guides how the library interacts with young people. On a monthly basis the youth are asked what they need and what they want to learn as part of using the library and its spaces. Participation and co-creation are at the crux of this philosophy and is how the library staff engage with its children and young adult users. In conversation with Erna Winters and Jan Kaldenbach, it was revealed that there is an everyday effort made to maintain this narrative and uphold the philosophy of the 'Library of 100 Talents'. By doing so, the engagement between the young people (and the adults who care for them, be they teachers, guardian or parents) and the library has resulted in a strong and ongoing reciprocal relationship between the space, the library staff and its users.



Much like other libraries on this tour, the youth space was created after the initial design and construction of the building was finished with an official launch of the additional space in December 2011. The team of young people imagined and then designed the entirety of the space from the layout to original concept furniture using local designers and carpenters to make manifest their ideas. There is a large collection of graphic novels shelved on wheeled bookcases and bright, bold colours and graphics complimented the area.



However, the space (being quite open) seemed bereft of furniture. Being only a few months old, it may be that the area will evolve over time to reflect the way young adults

utilise space. As a result there was no strong “Geography of yes” within this space to encourage young adults to stay.



In contrast to the youth space, the children’s floors (separate from the adult collection entirely) are a wonderland of touch, sight and sound. There are hidden rooms behind movable bookshelves, a floor made of blue cushions looking out over the landscape for reading and dreaming, toys and games for learning and playing, books and furniture designed to be climbed on as children discover and learn within this environment. Considering the immense success of community engagement, a sense of co-ownership between the library and its patrons, and an undeniably innovative and passionate group of library workers, it is only a matter of time before young adult voices will grow louder and the library will listen, innovate, co-create and evolve in tandem with their needs ultimately creating a “Geography of Yes” just as the children’s floor already have.

De Nieuwe Bibliotheek, Almere, Netherlands



Almere boasts just fewer than 200,000 residents and the city was purpose built to compensate for overpopulation issues in Amsterdam (De Nieuwe Bibliotheek, 2013). The library itself is located in a centralised shopping district which is a short stroll from the main train station. Stretching over three floors, the concept for this library's design, layout and architectural structure is strongly influenced by customer-centric retail experiences. Upon entering there were tables with stacks upon stacks of books, much like the displays found within book stores. There were very few spine-out titles with many of the books lying horizontally or in three to four deep piles of outward face display. What was also striking was the number of young adults in the space. Whilst walking from the train station into the main square toward the library there were young adults gathered, shopping and hanging out. Once in the library, this trend was also apparent.



Young adults actively engaged with all aspects this library had to offer. Their presence was visibly obvious and that engagement was encouraged. As before when discussing the Oakland libraries, it is not just the design and architecture which lends to a “Geography of Yes” but also the content—staff, collections, furnishings, what’s on offer, and, of course fellow young adults. This engagement was evident despite not having a designated young adult area (other libraries have been defined by TeenZone and ChillZone signage). It was the presence of those young adults which demonstrated the efficacy of this library’s design and deemed it as one having a “Geography of Yes”. Young adults—as staff, volunteers, or simply as a friends or peers—act as a mirror reflecting the young adult self, immediately stating that a place is “cool” (Meyers, 2001). It matters that there are young people in the library, and that they can see themselves reflected in the other users and this library is no different. It also shows that the value young adults add to this urban, public space matters.



When Marga Kleinenberg and other librarians were determining the type of future library Almere needed in the wake of dwindling patronage and competition from other information sources, they looked strongly to the retail

experience of a shop instead of the traditional system for categorising and cataloguing information (Fister, 2009). Much like the current trend in English language libraries to dump the Dewey Decimal System and instead create thematic areas of interest to categorise their books (see Boyd, South Bank Library in Melbourne as a very recent interpretation of this concept), the decision to create zones resulted from a desire to minimise the difficulty in finding information.



The zones were created to be distinguished easily one from the other not only via signage, but with the use of bright, bold colouring and iconography which gave visual cues as to the story each space was attempting to articulate. It encouraged the serendipity of discovery and the leisure aspect of browsing a library collection. The

number of items in this collection was astounding, but the logic behind having multiple copies of a title, especially those particularly popular titles, was (much like in a book shop) so an individual could walk in, find what they need with little effort and leave with a feeling of instant gratification.



This library space suggested that it was a building solely for books. Through the use of thematic imagery, signage and icons, the layout encouraged young adults to discover what lay beyond the books. Varying types of spaces allowed users the freedom to express varying types of behaviours. A café with a large newspaper and magazine collection is located on the upper floor near to gaming consoles and computers which take up a large portion of this floor. There are also specialist staff members who assist gamers. Expanding the space from within, an inner courtyard is open to the elements, complete with an urban garden and outdoor furniture. A study area includes a large number of tables and chairs—some shared and others corralled for privacy. A combination of traditional and non-traditional furniture filled this library offering user friendly spaces. That design decision encourages individuals to stay for extended periods of time.



This staying factor lends to an individual developing a feeling that this space is his or her third place. For young adults, especially, the ability to create a sense of belonging and to feel that one is welcome and can stay for long periods of time, is quite essential in that “Geography of Yes”, which this library articulated.

OBA-Amsterdam- Netherlands

The concept that young adults should feel that they are welcome in a space and are encouraged to stay in that place for extended periods of time, is one which OBA-Amsterdam is working to articulate in its design. While visiting and observing this library for a week, it was clear that the library staff understood the value and importance of young adults and felt the space could do more to reflect



the needs of their users. This meant that the space was, at the time, going under a process of change—evolving to meet the needs of its patrons, including young adults. The design of the space itself is easily changed, being incredibly dynamic, and during the tour of the main floors, it was quite clear that there was an array of design narratives being expressed within this central library. These articulated the concept of the “Geography of Yes” being sought. In regard to this library, young adults feature prominently as they are statistically the largest user group of OBA-Amsterdam’s spaces. Young adults are drawn to this library being easily accessed via public transport and located next to a music conservatory.



During a meeting with Hans van Velzen, director of OBA, he explained that he sees OBA-Amsterdam as being “free of all values” and thus more welcoming to the broad spread of members and visitors to this library. The three libraries which influenced the creation of OBA-Amsterdam were in Maastricht, Malmo and Barcelona for they all expressed values of openness, respect of space and an inviting atmosphere. He stated further that there is no specific young adult area as the library is for everyone. The only exception to this rule is with regard to children who have their own collection and space on the lower ground floor in order to accommodate the philosophy of the ‘Library of 100 Talents’.



Much like De Nieuwe Bibliotheek in Heerhugowaard, OBA-Amsterdam provides a vast array of seating and studying areas in varying combinations—long wooden diner like tables with wide cushioned bench seating, vintage table tops with matching wooden chairs, single armchairs, ottomans, couches, study rooms, and a large café/restaurant on the upper (public accessed) floor that hosted numerous young adults at its tables and out on the deck. As one ventures through the library, there are values being articulated in this building’s design and architecture which are attempting to speak to every individual upon entering this space. And where the young adult individual is outside the library walls, OBA responds by providing a reputable education and literacy outreach program, especially through schools. Central to OBA-Amsterdam’s design is the partnering and collaboration between Dutch writers, musicians, story-tellers, furniture designers, artists and publishers which all contribute to the look and feel of the library. From the art gallery itself to wall space, projections, glass display cases, multi-media and digital installations, interactive electronic screens or sound boxes which turn on when a person approaches, the content of this library is not made entirely of books and furnishings.

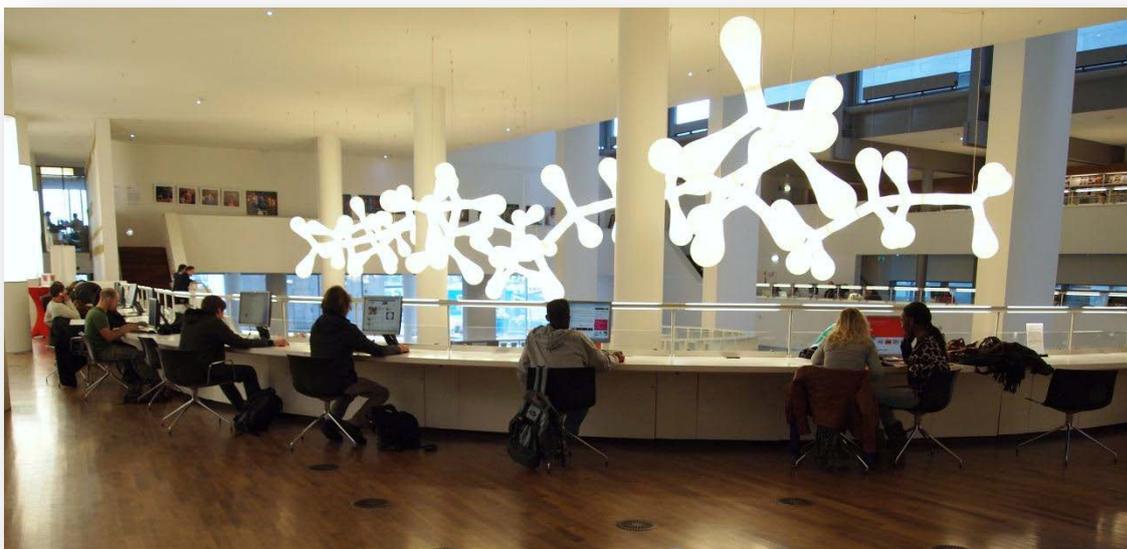


By showcasing the work of the community the library space becomes personalised. Individuals from outside the library in collaboration and co-participation with library staff begin to build and nurture the content within the space. By giving individuals a chance to tell their story, to express narratives that may not be commonly represented in the mainstream, OBA-Amsterdam is maintaining regular communication between the library as organisation and the everyday community member.



Even if there is not a particular space within the whole of this library (at least not during the time this information was gathered) that is a dedicated, specific, young adult space, one is hard-pressed to argue that the library fails to represent young adult culture. It

may not be as stylistically obvious as Dr Bernier's "bedroom effect" implemented in the Oakland libraries, but it is no mystery that representations of young adult culture and what it means to be a young adult varies from the individual to the city to the country and continent. When a library organisation is able to grasp and truly understand the nature of their particular young adult community, then the stylistic representations of this culture within a library space will no doubt reflect the local community's young adult demographic. The only way to come to the right conclusions regarding what it means to be "young adult" is to maintain open conversations with community members. Ergo, what may work in an urban library at the heart of a capital city may not speak the same language of "young adult" in a rural, country town library. A successful "Geography of Yes" takes into account the unique characteristics that differentiate that community's young adults from the next. OBA-Amsterdam has done just that and the evidence was plainly observed as there were young adults using the space throughout the entirety of the building.



Aarhus, Denmark- the future now: a citizen-centric service

Citizens as Co-Owners of the Library



Åby Library

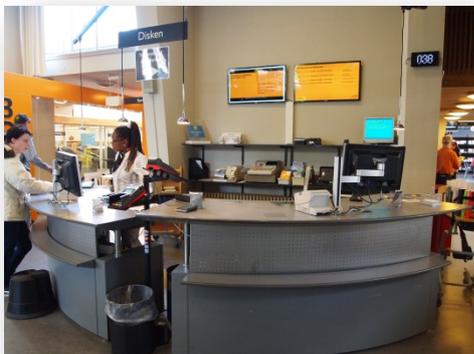
Like OBA-Amsterdam, Aarhus Public Libraries extended its hospitality via a week long work placement. The placement gave thorough evidence of how the public library engages with its community and is intrinsic to its success. Through library tours around the municipality and think-tank sessions a narrative emerged of a public library service truly for and of the people. Over the years Aarhus has been evolving in order to give services for the people, back to the people. The term "citizen" is at the crux of a new discourse being used to inform Aarhus' stories and those stories yet to be created.



Aarhus Main Library- Exterior

Having met with Rolf Hapel, Director of Citizens Services and Libraries in Aarhus, I was given some background on how the libraries had become so essential to Aarhus. It was

explained that language/semantics was vital to establishing a new story for the people of Aarhus. As a result the concept of an inclusive and reciprocal community evolved. Commonly referred to in English as “community centres,” but instead translated from the Danish, Aarhus is employing the phrase "citizen centres" with regard to their public libraries. The term encompasses three spheres: civic, citizen and service as part of that process of giving power back to its people. Previously, many channels of information services existed in separate offices and buildings and now these have been streamlined to exist in "citizen centres". They offer a one-stop-shop interactive experience with government, municipal and public services co-located within libraries. The decision to co-locate was based on a law introduced in 2006 which stated that all municipalities must have a library and that all libraries are obliged to ensure that civic, governmental and other information services are available. This led to putting citizen services and libraries into a single unit.



Aarhus Main Library- Interior

Further to the amalgamation of services and support, a large amount of information is now online and in digital formats. Due to this the library has taken the opportunity to provide training services as part of "digitising" the public. Sessions are run by library staff and are done in such a way as to change people's viewpoint around digital

information and upskill them into the digital world. In Aarhus, there has been an evolution in the definition of what a library is and does. Just over two years ago Aarhus responded to a strategic report, "Public Libraries in the Knowledge Based (Network) Society" put out by the Danish Department of Culture. Three major recommendations were extracted from that report to put into action:

1. Partnerships: get outside the library walls
2. Establish a Danish Digital Library
3. The 4 room library: future of the library lies in this model
 - a. Inspiration room (highly important)
 - b. Learning room
 - c. Performative room (this space is where the user creates the service/performance; it is about user-driven creation and innovation)
 - d. Meeting room (people meet to discuss; so, also considered a "democratic space")

Beyond nominally claiming co-creation, partnerships and collaboration with the community, this library service was an agent for truly giving ownership and power back to the citizens. Some examples of creating information accessibility for everyone, spatial experiences which cater to everyone's needs, and ways in which these library spaces have become co-owned are outlined below.

- "Digiform", Library Press Display- a new form of information dissemination which brings e-book content from the online world into the real world via touch and display screens in the library space; it is virtual information made tangible



Aarhus Main Library



Åby Library



Aarhus Main Library

- “Relational Library”- a library which works to build relationships with the entirety of the community instead of a single demographic by moving toward a service which relies solely on collaboration and participation between library staff and that community
- "Unleash the Users"- allowing the library patrons to be involved in the library in ways which actually mean something to them. In this process of engaging with people it is important to take care of them, listen to them, take them seriously and treasure their opinions and ideas



Aarhus Main Library- Interior



- Interdisciplinary Cooperation (not just librarians)- building and nurturing an organisation that has access to knowledge and know-how via its users, staff and stakeholders

Aarhus, at the time of this visit, was in the beginning stages of building their new library along the waterfront called Urban Mediaspace. Marie Østergård, Project Leader, Urban MediaSpace, has led the planning and strategic process for this new space. In conversation, she gave insight into what a library space and what the content, including staff, should aspire to. The following guidelines she shared can be applied to create a space having a “Geography of Yes”. She stated that a library is about a space which empowers, enriches and enables the users. The space should be colourful and engage all of the senses: sight, sound, touch and smell. Based on a retail design model the collection should be grouped in thematic classifications with predominant, outward-face display, and strong use of imagery (icons, signs and symbols). Lastly, the staff should be hand-picked based on life experience and skill, not simply because they are librarians. More exhaustive information about this new citizen centre, its construction, its mission and the desired outcomes can be found in the main website (Urban MediaSpace, 2013).

Regarding young adults, Aarhus Public Libraries explained that they see the entirety of a library space supporting and servicing this demographic under the same conditions that are given to other users of the library. Basically, there is no age discrimination when it comes to servicing Aarhus citizens. As with children and adults, young adults are regarded equally having the same privileges extended to them. There are partnerships, collaboration, co-creation and innovation with young adults. Louise Overgaard, Team Manager Main Library Aarhus, has a background of more than ten years working with youth. When she started there weren't many, if any, young adults using the library. In order to make change she spear-headed two projects, MindSpot (Overgaard, 2009) and a "MEeting YOUTH project" which resulted in the publication of a research

document titled "How to Engage Youth: A best practice report from MEeting YOUTH" (2008). These two pivotal research projects led to fundamental changes in the way that the library engaged and continues to engage with its young adult citizens. Mindspot has particularly been a successful model as a program which sees young adults, called 'mindspotters', innovating, creating and implementing their concepts (partnering the library with the community) into actuality via the financial and organisational support of library staff, referred to as the 'mindkeepers'. 'Demotek Aarhus' is an active project and space that at the time of this study tour was a project in progress and is an example of the types of co-operative work Mindspot sets out to achieve (DemotekAarhus, 2013). In its entirety, Aarhus (not just the library but as a community) nurtures "Geographies of Yes" in the values and behaviours it expresses every day. It is a standard worth achieving within other communities and public library services around the world.

Tallinn and Viljandi, Estonia- active libraries in active communities

Small libraries engaged with their community

In Estonia two libraries were visited—the Tallinn Central Library and Viljandi City Library located 170kms south of Tallinn. At Tallinn Central library, Brigitta Kivisaar, Head Librarian, explained how a heritage protected building had been refurbished and renovated to maintain the historical integrity of the space whilst modernising it.



Tallinn Library



By attempting to bring the digital world into the tangible world through e-book touch screen lending, providing free wireless to library users, offering space to study, relax, play, browse or enjoy art in the gallery spaces, Tallinn Central Library is working toward a user-centred library experience. Part of creating a library experience beyond the book and making the space more user-centric this library regularly offers programs and training for job seekers, specialised courses designed for the elderly, and courses on information seeking. There were also opportunities to upskill via self-guided programs where a user can borrow a laptop and headphones while in the library.



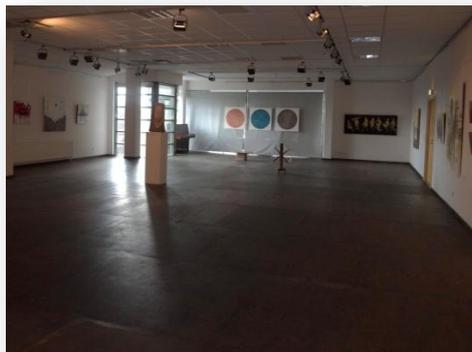
Further, there was a gallery located to the left of the main entrance of the library which exhibits Estonian and other artists from around the globe. One such exhibition going on at the time was one of black and white photographs which hung in the main hallway called “Faces of Poetry”. Using these sorts of visual cues within a library space allows the library user or visitor to be guided through and drawn to different areas of the library, thus giving them unspoken directions on the extent and depth of the library space.

Visually there are strong differences between Tallinn and the libraries seen in Netherlands and Aarhus, and many similarities between libraries viewed in the US. Shelves predominantly showed the spine side of the book and any outward face display was reserved mostly for the children’s room. Kaarin Krillo, a children’s librarian, explained that much of the programming on offer was in collaboration with schools such as supporting library lessons twice a month. In addition, the online presence for the children’s page was visually and playfully dynamic. This library focussed strongly on children and adult services which suggested a stronger “Geography of No” than “Geography of Yes”. There was not a distinct young adult space or area within the library, although, there was a young adult collection organised by grade level. However, this collection was in support of school reading lists with the content of the works being up to a year nine reading level.



Viljandi, supporting a population of under 20,000 people, was another library branch which did not seem to have a strong young adult presence within the building. As July is usually a school/summer holiday period for the majority of young people and their families, the time of year may account for this observation. Despite the lack of people around town, it became clear after a few days observation that the young adult presence exists outside the library space. The library and its young adults work in partnership and collaboration with Kondas Centre, a local art gallery and meeting space and the Estonian Traditional Music Centre, a centre which promotes and teaches traditional music, and other folk and cultural institutions across this area. Following Reet Lubi and Veronika Raudsepp Linnupuu, two librarians at Viljandi, I toured through the whole township of Viljandi. Having a tour of this town's cultural centres illustrated how well connected the

cultural centres and its community were in Viljandi. Reet and Veronika were passionate about the reciprocal relationship between the library and the community. The plethora of events, programs and projects happening in partnership and collaboration with the library was a testament to that reciprocity. Veronika outlined in her paper, “The Role of Viljandi Town Library in raising cultured and responsible citizens” that their “mission is to be open for the people. We don’t see ourselves only as book preservers or information seekers... Our purpose is to bring people together, help them learn about local customs and traditions, nourish their hunger for culture in all its forms” (2010). This statement is a simple testament to the greater extent of the work that the library does for, with and through its citizens.



The library itself is located in the centre of town. It houses a large art gallery and performance space, a collection in English funded by the US Embassy, historical documents, furniture for reading or relaxing, and a children's and youth area with a story-telling corner defined by tiered seating built into the wall as well as slightly different design. Each floor of this library was decorated with artwork along the walls; flora and other plants grew healthily due to an abundance of natural light filtering through large panes of glass. Like the library in Tallinn there was not any definitive design or architectural characteristics within the space which spoke strongly to young adults nor was there a strong sense of a "Geography of Yes" within the branch as a whole. Despite the library lacking that "Geography of Yes", that "yes" environment exists beyond the library's walls.

It would be difficult for a young adult from outside this community to enter the library and feel that they have walked into a space with a "Geography of Yes". Similar to other libraries which have strong community ties with young adults, but lack space to support them effectively, the unspoken narratives which inform those spaces are clearly felt and understood by its users. Even with lack of space or an underdeveloped young adult area, value exists because of the extent of outreach services, the staff's relationship with young adults, and the undervalued attitudes and behaviours library staff display outside the confines of the library space. It is represented and expressed via staff interaction with the public and the way in which staff engage and communicate with young adults. However, this relationship between library as an organisation and the community may not be felt or understood by an outsider or visitor even though the interactivity between Viljandi's cultural institutions, its library and the community is well engrained in the city's culture. This can be problematic as young adults need a proverbial

carrot in order to independently choose to use the public library. That proverbial carrot may be a friend, being in need of reading material for school, boredom or simple curiosity because the library has 'cool' architecture or design. Library spaces which speak more "The Geography of No" may deter young people from using those spaces, and, in this example, they could miss the opportunity to learn of that external relationship between the library and the community. This lack of access only hinders young adult engagement. There is always room for growth, change and evolution of space. Viljandi is a library which has the potential to enhance, refurbish and refresh its spaces as have all libraries.

Zagreb and Zadar, Croatia- the capital city and a coastal, main library

A nation rebuilding: public libraries as a place to gather



Zagreb Central Library

While in Croatia common themes emerged after visiting some of the Zagreb City Libraries. Unable to visit all 40 branches that make up this library service, I focussed on the main city centre, including Zagreb's Old Town. The five locations visited were accessible via bicycle. These library buildings were located inside pre-existing buildings that were, or currently still are, shopping centres, government offices, shop front store or heritage buildings. There was a predominance of support for children, tweens and adults with less attention and space allocated to young adults. There were large collections of

books (oftentimes overflowing into basement stack areas) with less space allocated for sitting or gathering. The libraries all described how many programs and events occurred on a regular basis for young adults, such as Reader of the Year. Many of the libraries visited were not the newest, most technologically advanced spaces. However, for what those spaces may have lacked in modern furniture, bright bold colours and the latest gadgets they made up for in their relationship with their young adults.



Zadar Main Library

Outside of Zagreb, in a coastal city called Zadar, there was a library which librarians in Zagreb recommended based on its well-known relationship with its young adult community. As with Estonia, Zadar was experiencing its holiday season. Despite that, Zadar's main library was the busiest space visited since time spent in Denmark. There were young people throughout the library participating in various ways:

- volunteering
- hanging out on benches
- laughing and chatting
- playing computer and console games
- studying
- gaming

The building itself was a refurbished, u-shaped military barracks with a courtyard at its centre. The courtyard had an oversized chess board placed in the centre with tables, umbrellas and a café encouraging people to play, rest and stay. The children's and youth area was to the left of the courtyard within the u-shaped floor plan.



During my visit there were young adult volunteers shelving and weeding books alongside their peers who were hanging out, reading or playing other games. This room was not the only area in which young people gathered. They were using the multi-media room located on the right hand side of the u-shaped building. This space houses computers where young people can gather around the screens, empty floor space in front of an X-Box Kinect to allow for optimal engagement with the Kinect games, and library reading and listening materials as a way of tying cross-over interests with gaming interests. That cross-over material includes music, magazines, graphic novels and movies (and the books, software, hardware, CDs and DVDs which reflect young adult interests and pop culture).



Mladen Masar, head of public relations, explained how the Zadar community and Zadar Library have a strong relationship, with its young adult demographic being especially important. He stated that the library suffers from lack of space for users and collections. As a result there is minimal attention given to young adult space. There have been discussions about renovating a space adjacent to the library and this building would become a young adult space in its entirety. Unfortunately, like many other countries, there have been difficulties with funding and the progress of this concept was on hold at the time of this study tour. Much like Viljandi and Aarhus libraries, Zadar had nourished relationships with their citizens in such a way as to ensure ongoing partnerships, engagement and co-creation. The spaces in this library may not have had a resounding “YES!” in its geography; however, as observed in Estonia, what Zadar Library lacked in design and allocated space for young adults it overtly expressed in its reciprocal relationships of trust, innovation, creation, learning and participation with its young adult users and volunteers.

Stockholm, Sweden: A library gem- TioTretton

Swedish Libraries as a guide for design & architecture



Kulturhuset, Stockholm (Photo sourced from <http://kulturhuset.stockholm.se/-/Press/Pressbilder-huset/>)

Located in Stockholm's city centre, the Kulturhuset is an expansive building which houses the library, spaces for musical, dance and artistic performance, exhibitions, lectures, spaces to meet, a café and specific floors designated for children and another area for teenagers (Kulturhuset Stockholm, 2013). Within the Kulturhuset is a specialist library called TioTretton, which translates to TenThirteen. It is the first library of its kind catering specifically to tweens aged 10 to 13 and prohibits all adults (except staff). Although 10 to 13 year olds are not the age bracket that this research was intending to investigate and ultimately advocate for, the theory, practice and philosophy which lends to the success of TioTretton as a space with an evident "Geography of Yes". The characteristics of its design, its ideological and philosophical values put into practice, and its mission and vision are innovative attributes which other library services could incorporate into their provision of services.



(For photos including children please refer to the TioTretton website). Similar to the Dutch implementation of the 'Library of 100 Talents' mentioned earlier, the philosophy which informs TioTretton's space supports the idea that youth learn in multifaceted ways. Therefore, the possibilities for expressing one's self creatively are limited by a young person's own imagination. To quote from the TioTretton website,

"Imagine a library for all five senses. Where thought is power. Where fantasy is law. Where you can cook up a music video, animate a potato gratin, film your homework, or even knit a computer game. A place where it is sometimes brave to be a coward. That library now exists!" (TioTretton, 2013).

The first impression this space gave upon entering, was that in this place young people are encouraged to play, to explore and discover, to make a mess, to sleep and rest, or simply hang out for a while. The space articulated a "Geography of Yes" via its content and design. On first observation TioTretton looked more like an artist cooperative or warehouse. On closer inspection, however, the space was as much a library space with books on shelves as it was a workshop for creating and performing. Part of the innovative design was the integration of books into the furniture and layout. Books were shelved under seats, on tables, in the theatre or as outward face display. The books were conspicuous in some areas, and in others were

aesthetically imbedded in an area's design. As an example, cookbooks and other food related reading material was shelved on display in the kitchen.



Aside from books, TioTretton has constructed spaces which support the tweens creative ventures. There is a kitchen, a production and music studio, a filming and performance space with stage and costumes for dress up, computer hardware and software to create games, songs, videos, art, or whatever the young people can imagine. The concepts behind choosing what would be on offer within the space of TioTretton were very much based on the middle-ness of being between the ages of 10 and 13. Henrik Bylund, who at the time was the Team Coordinator at TioTretton, explained this age group is in a state

of limbo. This limbo is of being a child as defined by their parents, carers and teachers, but feeling as if they are more grown up. However, in that limbo is also the understanding that these tweens still enjoy aspects of younger expressions of play in their interactions. Take for example the wardrobe of dress up clothes. When adults were asked if they thought their children would appreciate dressing up they immediately assumed that their children were too old for that kind of play. However, when the young people were asked a similar question, they were far more enthusiastic about the idea than their parents or carers had assumed they would be. The assumption of knowing what it is that young people need or want is at the heart of libraries creating spaces and upholding attitudes which lend to the “Geography of No”. A newly built space has some glamour and shine to it, but what meaning remains after the newness wears off is what determines the “yes” or “no” of a library space. In this way, TioTretton was designed and built with the opinions of young people at the forefront of decision making.



Another aspect of this space, mentioned above, is the idea that grownups are prohibited, excepting staff. Therefore, the selection of staff to work at TioTretton was integral to its ongoing success and its sustainability. For TioTretton it was not about a library

qualification or education, but more about skills, creativity and advocacy for youth. At the time of this library tour, there were two qualified librarians with non-library staff having relevant skills to support bringing these young people's creative and learning imaginings to life.



For these reasons, TioTretton is a space which allows stories to be read, told, shared, built, dramatized, cooked up, drummed out or written. It is a place which gives young people a chance to be young people in a space which has an unquestionable "Geography of Yes" to those who use it.

Discussion

How to encourage young adults to enter the library to become members, participate, create or even just relax is an ongoing concern in public libraries and has been a concern amongst youth library professionals for decades. One can look as far back as 1937 to an article posted in a library journal in the US which asked “Why do youth not use libraries?” to see evidence of that concern (Rainey, 1937). A part of this question can be answered when looking to the concepts of the “Geography of No” and the “Geography of Yes” which this research is hoping to address. It also lies in the practices and philosophies which inform how each library chooses to interact with its community—whether that interaction perpetuates “us versus them” relationships or encourages reciprocal relationships which nurture and support collaboration, co-creation and participation inside *and* outside library building walls.

The question around young adults not being in the library and how to get them in(volved) remains partly due to the contention around the definition of the word “library” which effects how the library and young adults relate. One reason for this is there are fundamental differences between individual values of library staff. Those values inform the narratives which library spaces articulate and lend toward behaviours and attitudes which influence geographies of yes and no. The behaviours enacted and the narratives articulated can either undermine efforts to engage with young adults or can help improve and boost young adult advocacy. Just as the library is and should be an ever-evolving institution and organisation, so too should the values of library staff evolve. The library and its staff must heed the needs and best interest of its community. Unless those two stakeholders—the library itself and the library users—are on the same page,

then no amount of open-mindedness or support of youth advocacy within libraries will create an environment that is pro-young adult.

Thankfully there are niche cohorts of librarians working in communities around the world who are attempting to address and assess the question of young adults and public libraries. A specific component within this assessment is the importance of developing young adult-specific spaces within the library, a theme that is not without its ideological disagreements. Two concepts which emerged during my study tour regarding young adults and space were:

- a) “Don’t young adults want to have their own place to get away from adults?”
- b) “They should be a part of the library; they shouldn’t be isolated.”

It was evident both concepts worked well in practice. However, the general practice and reasons for choosing either option ‘a’ or option ‘b’ was less out of consultation with young adults and more out of an assumption of the infallibility of best practice. Some of the narratives informing these two ideologies included:

- the library staff’s view of themselves as gatekeepers of knowledge versus knowledge sharers
- library staff’s responsibility to library users
- the “young adult question” – are young people important
- what is a library– is it recreational or educational
- questions around the enactment of power structures

Within the observations noted, it was evident young adults were using library spaces the best way they could within the confines of the rules that dictated use of those spaces. In some libraries the issue of financial ‘freezes’ and budgetary constraints meant that spatial

developments were practically non-existent. In other libraries, some built within the last year or two, there was little to no consideration given to young adults compared to the amount of effort put into the design of children's and adult spaces. Regarding those libraries which had dedicated youth space, it was not that young adults were restricted to those areas, but, once space had been designated and designed for them, young adults tended to congregate there without exploring what else the library offered. The dichotomy that grew out of the delineation of space was one which showed the broader public library space as exclusive to adults with the much smaller, young adult specific areas acting as containment for them. The central problem in this was (and continues to be) the perpetuation of the "us versus them" discourse between the library and young adults. Removing that discourse, balancing the power and placing young adults at the same level of importance and privilege as adults and children eliminates any possibility of doubt as to why a dedicated young adult area was created in the first place or why the entirety of a public library space may have a "Geography of Yes".

Compounding the issue of that duality of practice was the mentality of people influential in the design of libraries and those influential in determining how the library supports its community's needs. Often the mentality and perspective was a stereotypical view with the library functioning as a book repository focussed strongly on literacy and education. This perception tended to coincide with the ideology of public libraries as an extension to young adult academic learning or pursuits. In this type of environment, the librarian acts as a "gatekeeper of knowledge" creating a hierarchy of assumed knowledge and power mirroring other authority figures with whom young adults interact (and not always in a positive manner). For some young adults this ideology is problematic because they are less likely to spend their free time in any place which replicates or reinforces

power structures they may already encounter in their daily lives. Without proper engagement and collaboration with young adults in the building and design of youth spaces in a public library, there is the risk of wasted money, inadequate and unnecessary construction, and obsolete design. Conversely, the majority of people encountered during the study tour were open-minded, innovative and forward thinking. Their views regarding the relationship between young adults, library space, what a library is to its community and their collective future influenced the evolution of the library to become a third place for young adults. In these libraries young adults engaged with the space beyond the act of study. Further, young adults were capable of being creators, innovators, designers, producers, performers and workers within the library. It was in those libraries that the “Geography of Yes” was ever present.

It is worth noting that even with young adult engagement, libraries risk making a once innovative and young adult-centric space uninteresting or unpopular. One example of how a library space can transform from cool to uncool is recognition of when a space exhibits an *inverse power optic* (a concept and term spoken and used in conversation with Dr Bernier). An inverse power optic is the visual language of when a once user-centred space is subverted to instead favour the librarian or library organisation, thus undermining the independence and interests of a library user. The physical manifestation of this is through the visual cues and processes instilled to control usage of a space through shelf layout, design and display, and management. The chance for this subversion is more common in young adult spaces as the assumption of authority may influence attitudes and behaviours toward the younger user. One way libraries can enable a space to maintain its user-centred design intention is implementing systems of classification based on browsability which allow for users to have control of their library

experience. Public libraries have the opportunity to be a neutral place where young adults feel they are able to access all forms of information, are agents of their own search and discovery (in relation to both experiences and information) as well as to feel comfortable enough to ask a librarian for assistance if it is needed.

Looking back at the initial research proposal it was hoped to document best practices in library design subsequently developing new, best practices for designing young adult spaces locally. This proposal was based on an assumed understanding of library engagement between the library and young adults with longstanding relationships sustained by how involved youth were. What was discovered after the study tour and work placements was that the more control library staff relinquished to young adults, the more young adults felt they mattered as individuals, and believed they could make a difference. In those spaces which had created an equal standing between young adults and librarians was a resounding, clear “Geography of Yes”. Further, it was observed that what was best practice for one community and its young adults could not be assumed to be best practice for another. This finding applies to different groups and age ranges of young adults within the broader demographic of what is known as “young adult”. Instead of attempting to create a singular best practice, libraries with a “Geography of Yes” showed evidence of intelligent, meaningful communication with young adults combined with research to implement change and establish new practices. By accepting and instituting an ideology that public libraries are ever-evolving, ever-changing and fluid entities, then the assumption of the infallibility of best practice will be challenged. Challenging best practice allows for change, gives opportunity for growth and also opens pathways for conversations that offer differing opinions and perspectives.

The subversion of the term “best practice” is necessary because of the political discourse and narrative attached to it. The claim that a particular library or library service has determined its best practices is value-laden. This assumption of best practice correlates directly to the stratification of values held by a library as an organisation. It communicates that there is a singular solution or answer to the community’s needs. Further, this term allows decision makers to implement changes based on other decision makers’ research and work. This is problematic not only because it justifies minimal engagement and consultation with young adults and the broader community, but also because justifying actions based on best practice eventually leads to stagnation—a stunting of the growth and evolution of public libraries and its relationship with all citizens. Communities are ever-changing and ever-evolving because of its citizens who bring with them different values and needs. Their expectations around what a public library offers and enacts are just as varied as they are. Because of the richness of opinion and the uniqueness of each individual, it is logical to approach any library development and advancement as the current solution, but not as a permanent or even *best* solution. We can broadly sweep across the whole of communities around the world and establish commonalities amongst all citizens, but the nuances which make the core of each community an individual entity is what library organizations should be attempting to grasp and then service.

The behaviours and narratives in public libraries around the infallibility of the term “best practice” ties in well with observations of top-down power structures and hierarchies which uphold and instil certain values. Those values shift libraries in a certain direction, which is not always what suits the needs of young adults from the community. This top-down approach to the running of a public library corresponds with the belief that

the librarian is the “gatekeeper of knowledge”. To wit, decisions are made *in the best interest of or on behalf of* young adults which ultimately undermines their intelligence. This mentality overlooks the potential of young adults being knowledge managers in their own right about what concerns and interests them in their daily lives—academically, creatively and recreationally.

Conclusion

In the discourse of contemporary library space design, young adult opinions are now being sought, considered and acted upon. However, this is not in the mainstream nor wholly accepted practice. Bernier writes in an article for VOYA (Voices of Youth Advocates)

There is always far more that we could do. We can work toward insuring, for instance, that all libraries offer caring service for all young people... Libraries can become enriching environments—atmospheres of joy, entertainment, exploration, skill-building, access to community assets—places in which to promote youth development (2003).

For these reasons, and as noted in the original application for the Barrett Reid Scholarship, this research is vital and necessary. Answers to the questions I proposed regarding how to bridge the gaps in service provision and library spatial/collection development with regard to young adults was strongly grounded in collaboration and partnerships. It was also entrenched in exchanges of trust between the young people and library staff and because of the passionate drive of youth advocates within the public library sector striving to make changes, to make differences.

It was made evident on this study tour that many library services did not specifically consider their young adult users and, as a result, the spaces within those libraries articulated a “Geography of No”. By the end of the study tour it was less young adult apathy toward public libraries and more the behaviours and attitudes expressed by staff and the library organisations. The outmoded philosophies about the role of the library in a community and behaviours toward young adults were influential in undermining the development of reciprocal relationships between young adults and the public library.

However, for those libraries which did have a “Geography of Yes” in their spaces, it was a vibrant, clear and expressive reflection of the relationship between the library space, library staff and young adults. It was also a reflection of the relationship that existed between the library and other community organisations, government bodies, social and commercial stakeholders, and citizens as a whole. Underpinning the work these libraries are doing is the knowledge that young people matter and their place within society is fundamental to the wellbeing of their communities.

The opposing viewpoints outlined in the discussion were expressed in varying degrees during the study tour. It appeared to be dependent on such factors as:

- who was in charge
- the number and prevalence of young adults within the community (which was influenced by proximity to public transport, housing and learning institutions)
- the perception of young adults as a problem to be dealt with
- the perception that young adults are capable, creative and intelligent citizens

As a starting point to overcome the dualities of practice both in design and staff behaviours, library organisations need to reposition the value of young adults closely followed by a move to subvert and redefine outmoded stereotypes. This type of change is a necessity because, at this stage, much of the young adult use of, and engagement with, public libraries has been inextricably linked with those stereotypes. And to do so is not an impossible process. As an example, when the Public Library of Kennemerwaard in Heerhugowaard, Netherlands decided they needed to build designated youth space for the kids growing too old for the children’s floors, they did it in consultation with their young people. What makes the process of repositioning their youth as valuable in their spaces went beyond mere youth engagement and extended into training and educating

library staff as well as adult library users. Any perceived fear, hesitation or disenchantment about the presence of youth outside of the designated children's area was minimised. This consultative process of engagement was well received.

Additionally, it is not just perspectives relating to young adults that need re-evaluation, but the need to address the contention about what a library represents:

- what it means to the people who work in them
- what it means to the individuals using them
- what is a public library

The purpose of the library and what it offers its users is a multi-layered *thing*. Many public libraries, especially in Arhus, Denmark, have found a balance by publicly stating that their spaces are meant for leisure usage, intellectual and academic pursuits, and for creative, performative and participative expression with and by their citizens. Many libraries are, much like in Denmark, reconciling out-dated modes of serving the community and designing new spaces. However, there is still much work to be done, especially regarding young adults, and, more common than not, the question of young adults in the library continues to reflect the contentions outlined above and remains a grey area for many library services. Through the continuing work, practice, service and research by others, the library industry has the opportunity to dismantle those stereotypes and evolve into a service which better reflects the community and its young adult users.

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Appendix A

Student 1's testimony:

Student 1 did an internship through MetWest High School for three years across different working areas of Oakland Central Library. The work experience came after having already been a regular user of the teen space there. Her introduction to the library happened simply because she joined a friend in the process of returning a book. The book's particulars were important—it was a manga style graphic novel. Having not previously come across books like the one her friend had, she sat in the graphic novel area of the library and began reading what was in front of her. In particular, the series *Inu Yasha*, attracted her attention, and in this simple, yet profound moment, she began the process of becoming a library member. In order to visit the space regularly, she mentioned that she had to convince one of her three siblings to go with her on Sundays, from open until close. One of her sisters agreed. I asked her why she goes and why she believes other young adults go to the library, and the following are some of the key reasons she mentioned:

1. word of mouth entices friends to come with friends
2. curiosity - where are these people going and what are they doing there?
3. it's a hang out spot- it is a way to get off the streets especially when you may be a person of colour because it is easy to get in trouble with the gang injunctions the city has regarding groups of people "hanging out" together
4. you can eat and drink, there is music played, and Brian - the main TeenZone librarian is "cool" and "nice". He's the type of youth librarian that is open, friendly and listens. (Other teachers and librarians stated their support of Brian and the work he does for the young people at the central library)
5. location, location, location – being central allows for people to access the library via public transport, walking from the local schools and neighbourhoods. Something else: it is not her neighbourhood—it is not the “ghetto.”

When asked about the look of the library space itself (the building, the furnishings and the overall look of the place) and what attracts her to the library generally, Student 1 responded glibly that she never really thought consciously about the look of the place. She stated that she doesn't care what the outside of building looks like. What matters is the content inside which includes staff. The other librarians are part of a staff culture she feels welcomed by, and from an objective point of view, this feeling is probably influenced by the fact that she volunteered and interned at the library for three years. Her role within the library is not just as a user or regular visitor, but is rather personalised thus informing her experience of the space making it incredibly special as compared to someone walking in from the street.

Further, the act of discovering what a building holds, what is contained in that space, she knows is about word of mouth and what your friends or peers are doing. "What is that building those kids I know from school are going into?" and that is the moment when curiosity plays its part. She continued to explain how once inside the library—as you approach the dedicated teen space—the vibe begins to change as does the physical appearance of the hallway one walks down to get into TeenZone. Artwork and writing by local young people hang from the walls and the sounds from inside TeenZone become more audible. It is inevitable that one's anticipation builds as s/he approaches this area. With the walls covered in youth artworks, the space much like a teenager's bedroom, I asked her to discuss with me how the space was developed and what level of young adult engagement occurred in the space's construction.

Through conversations with Dr Anthony Bernier and excerpts of the conversation had with Student 1, it was revealed TeenZone had to be designed and constructed in a pre-existing space, thus limiting the possibilities. The result, however, was a successful story of

youth engagement with the library and with designers. Student 1 recollected that it took about two years to pull all the ideas together and was finished in 2009. The YLC (Youth Leadership Council) has a membership of up to twelve young people at any given time, and during the development of TeenZone it acted and made decisions on behalf of the community's young people. An example of the limitation this type of exclusive engagement with a council of young people is that this group would already have a vested interest in libraries and would have a specific, library-centric view of how things should be in a space especially developed for them. How to capture the voice of those young people who don't already use such a type of place is a perspective that tends to be mismanaged or allowed to be overlooked as it can be a more difficult group with whom to engage. However, having the YLC be a part of TeenZone's development is not something to take lightly and is one which should be congratulated. Student 1 stated that before the space was redesigned it was "dull" and "quiet" with a need to be "spiced up" in design, decoration and furniture, which happened in its reconstruction and refurbishment. "Oakland TeenZone: Humming a New Tune," an article in VOYA Magazine written by Dr Anthony Bernier and Nicole Branch, goes into further detail about the process of design, construction, staffing and creating content for TeenZone, concluding with lessons learned and what will come next (Bernier, 2009).

Her subsequent comments regarding her use of the space related to her identity as an 18 year old African-American woman living in a section of Oakland that she described as having strong gang representation, equating to gun violence and other situations where one's safety is not guaranteed. She spoke of her routine which revolves around the library's opening hours (most nights the branch closes at 8pm). She goes to the library after school, stays there until closing, and then goes home. She has turned this practice of library usage (the passage of time in the library means less time spent in her neighbourhood) into a ritual that for her is strongly based on her need for personal safety. One of the poignant comments Student 1

made during our conversation was how she feels safe in the library. There are no real safeguards against danger as it is a public space. There are many arguments against claiming libraries as safe spaces (Bernier, 2003) so I understand the sentiment behind discouraging the use of this kind of terminology regarding libraries. Specifically, there are issues of responsibility, duty of care and liability that come into play if the community deems or some young person's parent(s) deem, a space as 'safe' for their children. However, the definition of any word as broad as one like "safe" is quite flexible dependent on the user's intention. In Student 1's case she wasn't thinking of safety in terms of there being a security presence or any sort of system of protection in place within the library, but more as a comparison of 'realities'. For her it was choosing between different public spaces and places: the library, the streets in her neighbourhood which have a substantial amount of gang-related violence, and the perceived 'danger' of being outside where police have permission under gang injunction laws to harass her and her friends. [This term "harassment" could be controversial, but young adults and other adults who spoke to me about these injunctions implied and or believed that this was the type of behaviour enacted by the local authorities towards local youth.] As with any public space there are dangers involved not only in relationship to structures and design, but also it is the people who use a space who determine the atmosphere within that space. If members of a gang decide to use the library for their meetings, then the space shifts and the comfort other users may have felt in the space diminishes. The library is no longer safe in the way Student 1 was defining "safe" versus "unsafe". Again, the value of a space or place is strongly determined by the content: visitors, users, staff members, collection, technological access, et cetera.

I closed the interview by asking her what could make the space better and her only annoyance was TeenZone has a people capacity of 80. She'd like to see that number increased by increasing the area. On busy, crowded days she feels that potential library

members may come to check out the space, observe how busy it is, and instead of staying, choose to leave with the possibility of not returning.

Appendix B

Student 2- a younger perspective via a library tour:

Student 2, a 13 year old student from MetWest High School with a desire to study medicine at university, met with me for a brief amount of time. Even though Student 2 is a younger young adult, her involvement with the library was an appreciated perspective on the space. Especially, because, unlike Student 1, Student 2 was more guarded about her personal life and the effect the library has had on her. In our time together she walked me down to the main library and toured me through the space. Her relationship with the space and with the library itself was not entirely recreational, but more a means to an end. Specifically, the reason she was doing her internship at the library was as a temporary, alternate option because her age prevented her from being able to undertake a placement at a health care centre. Her desire to do well academically was tied strongly to that hope to study medicine. Next year, she stated, she'll be able to move to an internship more suited to her interests. At the time of our meeting she interned solely in the TeenZone and had found it to be a good experience. During the library tour she described her perceptions of the space and what mattered to her. Isis made a point to comment on the large graphic novel and manga collections, the study spaces which can be booked in advance, the promotion of writing events and local youth interests as part of the display as well abundant space to sit and study. She also commented on how almost all the display, artwork and signage, save a few obvious, library-created ones, were done by the young adults themselves. The posters, drawings, signs, colourings, and all other forms of display are part of the "bedroom" effect in space creation. The result was a lot of posters, music playing in the background, movable furniture,

and lots of curves rather than horizontal or vertical lines in the furnishings, shelving and design.

Appendix C

Student 3- how an overdue fine meant not returning to a library for a long time:

The last MetWest student I spoke with was a 19 year old who uses the library to borrow books. I asked him to talk to me about his library experience considering he did not have the same personal connection to the space via interning as the other two students had had at the library. He started his story from the very beginning remembering how he was regularly read to as a child and when he was able to have his own library card how he let a book become incredibly overdue. Not being able to afford the fine he simply stopped going to the library. Not returning to that library meant he did not use any other libraries either. It was possible the experience had tainted him from shame or guilt. No matter, the point is he chose not to return, which unfortunately is a common move by young people when they build up a large amount of overdue or lost fines. Fast forwarding to the present, Student 3 explained that while at MetWest he ended up being in the same advisory group as Student 1. And, by chance, he saw her reading a manga series which piqued his curiosity. Following that conversation she took him to the library and it was from that moment that he began visiting and borrowing books from TeenZone.

When I asked him if the design and architecture of a building's interior and exterior factors into whether or not a space is deemed cool, uncool, worth exploring or bothering about he adamantly responded with a comment to the effect of "who cares about the outside?!" He made it very clear that it is the content that matters most and that staff are part of that. Student 3 stated that young people's involvement in the creation of a space is a good thing, but in the end it was the content which he believed would attract young people

and influence their return. For him content included books, computers and the staff. Much like Student 1 he spoke with respect and with high regard for Brian. When I questioned him about Brian he said that what made Brian such a great librarian was not only what he perceived were shared, similar interests, but that Brian was a good listener. Student 3 made it a point to highlight Brian's listening skills.

Appendix D

Breaking Down Barriers: Engaging Young Adults by Creating a "Geography of Yes!" in Public Libraries

Referring to Dr Anthony Bernier's concept of "The Geography of No ", research supported by this scholarship will allow me to visit, interview, investigate, study and analyse specific libraries, their users and staff. It is hoped through investigation and anecdotal information gathered throughout the tour the resulting research will provide outcomes which will encourage young people to make library spaces their third place, resulting in public libraries having a "Geography of Yes" to counter Dr Bernier's "The Geography of No".

My specific interest is not just investigating those libraries with a 'youth' corner or 'teen' area, but libraries which are inviting in their entirety for young people. Specifically, those young adults in the upper end of the demographic: the 16 to 24 years olds. The purpose of focussing primarily on this age bracket of the young adult demographic is based on evidence and feedback communicated by youth service professionals across library services in Australia. It is clear that staff are unsure as how to support this group, what to offer in relation to services, how to create spaces and collections that will interest them, and in the end how to maintain relationships with them once parents or other authoritative figures are absent to act as a coercive force for them to be present in our libraries.

Further, it is desired that I will be able to gather evidence about how communities responds to libraries which effectively support this age bracket and how libraries in turn maintain their relevance in highly populated and urban environments. With the results from this study tour and work placement I will take the initial research paper written for the “12 to 24s @your Library Conference” entitled “The Public Library as “Ürban” Youth Space: Redefining public libraries through services and space made available for youth and how youth librarians can establish an über experience” and add the evidence, outcomes, practical suggestions and gathered results to it for publication and for use in conference presentations.

Lastly, I endeavour to utilize the entirety of my gatherings to present these ideas and concepts as support for implementing change in Melbourne Library Service and its approach to young adults. This last proposed outcome is tantamount to the end result as Melbourne Library Service is in a period of growth based on an influx of residents to City of Melbourne. To answer the needs of the community includes answering the needs of this demographic as well (especially considering this age range accounts for 37% (as at 2006) of the population which does not include the numerous number of those solely working and studying in the city). From there, influencing change in other Victorian Public Library Services and hopefully services across Australia is an ultimate goal. Therefore, the setting of new ‘best practices’ in the field of youth services within public libraries is what I hope will be the over-arching outcome from this research, travel, study and work experience/placement.