



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Interactive Teen Displays at Libbie Mill Library
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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1. Program Overview

Teen programming in public libraries typically emphasizes group participation in scheduled events and provides opportunities for teens to socialize with their peers. As a result, introverted teens and teens who lack transportation may not have the same opportunities as their more sociable or mobile peers to engage with the library. To accommodate these teens through an engaging, passive program, librarians at Libbie Mill Library in Henrico, Virginia began creating monthly, interactive displays aiming to inform, entertain, and encourage teens to contribute and explore responses.

Since June 2016, more than 3,300 teens have interacted with the displays which have covered a range of topics including: New Year's Resolutions, Summer Reading, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Pride Month, and Earth Day. Librarians have found that the displays foster and strengthen relationships between teens, their peers, and library staff. The innovative and easily scalable and replicable displays successfully engage teens with library services on their own schedule and on their own terms with the ultimate goal of inspiring teens to become lifelong library users.

2. Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Scheduling programming for teens in public libraries can be difficult for many reasons. Teens often have busy school schedules, are involved in afterschool activities, and depend on adults for transportation. In addition, many introverted teens do not want to attend group programs. "Passive programming" is a term used in librarianship for programs that are available for library users to engage with at any time, and traditionally one might find passive programs like scavenger hunts or a reading challenge checklist in their public library. Passive programs are great for teens that have busy schedules, lack transportation, or are introverted. However, the use of passive programs raises additional problems for serving the teen demographic.

With traditional passive programs like scavenger hunts, the flow of information is one-way: teens have no input – they must simply follow directions. Additionally, passive programs like scavenger hunts or reading challenges can only be completed once before becoming obsolete; they do not evolve and cannot capture interest over time. Because passive programs do not allow teens to contribute, nor maintain interest over time, they cannot impart the feeling of investment that is crucial to engagement. Introverted teens or teens with scheduling or transportation constraints deserve engaging library programs. There is a need for passive programming in teen services librarianship that allows teens to not simply receive information or follow instructions, but to actively participate over time. There is a further need for these passive programs to let participants become stakeholders, in order to foster genuine engagement.

3. How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Interactive Teen Displays at Libbie Mill are innovative because they solve problems raised by traditional passive programs in libraries. By requiring input from both library staff and teens, the displays are more engaging and compelling for teens than traditional passive programs. Like traditional passive programming, the teen displays at Libbie Mill allow teens to participate in library programs on their schedule, but their ability to contribute content, and watch the displays evolve over time, allows them to have a stake in the program, and imparts the feeling of ownership that is crucial to engagement. The displays strengthen ties between teens, the library, and the wider community, by appealing to teens' social, emotional, and intellectual selves. Libbie Mill Library's teen displays help develop a feeling of investment in the library for their teen community, creating stakeholders who could become lifelong library users.

4. How Program Was Carried Out

The Libbie Mill Library opened in October 2015, in a large, modern building that uses glass walls and room dividers throughout. Initially, the Teen Services staff created art and displays near the entrance of the Teen area to call attention to the room and the location of the teen service desk. Soon, Teen Services staff realized the displays were a great way to engage teens who did not normally attend library programs.

The displays are designed to facilitate an interactive environment in which teens can learn, be entertained, create, and discover. All displays encourage interaction in some way, whether inviting teens to write or draw a response on a Post-It Note, to participate in collaborative art, or to play a game. The objective of these displays has evolved into providing high-quality, engaging passive programming for teens, and fostering a sense of investment in the library in order to inspire lifelong library use. The displays achieve this sense of investment by appealing to teens socially, emotionally, and intellectually. They also achieve the library's educational mission by being informative, inspiring, and literary.

Teen Services librarians create the framework of each display, often informed by teens in the area Teen Advisory Board, or by major annual events, like Black History Month or Summer Reading Club. Teen library users then add content or interact with the display over a period of time, usually around one month. At the beginning of each month, staff begin switching out the displays, trying to save as many pieces as possible to reuse for future displays. Depending on how complex a display is, installation time ranges from 15 minutes to a few hours. Teens often assist with the installation.

The first displays on the glass wall that marks the entrance to the teen section of Libbie Mill Library were Post-It Note Art displays, where teens were invited to choose a design and create a large-scale image using different colored Post-it Notes. These art displays were popular, inexpensive, and easily changed and rearranged. Librarians at Libbie Mill capitalized on the visual interest generated by these displays, as well as the low cost of materials, and began creating

displays that were not only visually appealing, but required participation from the viewer. In January of 2017, for example, librarians created a candle out of Post-It Notes on the wall, and asked teens to complete the following sentences: “In 2017, I wish...” and “In 2017, I hope...” Over 90 teens contributed responses to the display, and over the month of January, the artwork grew from a candle into a visually striking bulletin board of anonymous aspirations. The display was perfect for introverted teens, and also enabled teens with busy schedules or limited transportation to be involved in a library project. The display appealed to teens on an emotional level, creating a bond between participants and the library.

In February 2017, librarians created a Post-It Note heart on each of our front windows. One heart was right-side up; the other was upside down. On the right-side up heart, teens were encouraged to write what makes their hearts happy. On the upside down heart, teens were encouraged to write what makes their hearts sad. More than 220 teens provided answers, which librarians described as “heartfelt and heartbreaking.” With engagement and inspiring a lifelong relationship with libraries as stated goals of this project, the February heart display is a perfect illustration of fostering a feeling of investment in library programs and services. Participants in the February interactive display collectively created a deeply resonant testament to their lived experience. The program empowered teens to share information, reflect, create art, and connect with their community and local library on a creative and emotional level. These displays have the ability to integrate the library into the social and cultural fabric of its local teen community, and to strengthen that fabric.

Many of the displays are both interactive and educational. A Black History Month display featured books about Black history and by Black authors. Staff created an interactive display with quotes by prominent black Americans, and teens could guess who said which quote. Members of the Teen Advisory Board helped to select who would be featured in the display. A Women’s History Month display in March showcased photos and accomplishments of 53 lesser-known

women. Staff also worked with teens to create a giant collaborative art project using a Rosie the Riveter coloring sheet. The interactive and community-generated nature of the displays imbued history with energy and excitement, and was educational while still requiring input from teens. Instead of information flowing one way, from library staff to teen patrons, the displays encourage input from both parties. Instead of a lecture, the displays function as a continuous discussion. This helps further the connection between the library and its teen patrons.

Displays have also been tied directly to reading and literature. A display used to promote the library's Summer Reading Club in 2017 featured a word search on a glass wall. Staff discovered they could write the letters backwards and on the opposite side of the glass. Teens could then circle the words they found with window markers, and staff could erase the word search and rewrite it so more teens could participate. The activity was inexpensive, interactive, and could change over time. In December 2017, Teen staff drew a basic gingerbread man outline and added distinguishing features of characters from YA literature. Teens were asked to match the gingerbread-person to the character's name. This display appealed to teens who read a lot and could easily identify the characters, but it also helped promote books to teens looking for something to read, or who haven't read as widely. It brought literature to life.

Many of the displays feature a selection of relevant books that are available for checkout, which encourage teens to discover a new book. For LGBTQ+ Pride Month in June 2017, staff attempted to find every book in the teen collection that included characters who identified as such, and printed each title and author name on a Post-it Note. The Post-it Notes were then arranged into a rainbow. Teens were encouraged to take a Post-it Note if a book sounded interesting and check the book out.

Some displays ask for a contribution of original work from teens. For example, in celebration of National Poetry Month in April 2017, teens were invited to take pages of withdrawn library

books and color them with Sharpies to create blackout poetry, which were then displayed on the wall. Thirty teens contributed original blackout poetry. Another 16 teens arranged scanned images of book spine text to create “book spine poetry,” that was also displayed on the wall. Providing a method and a venue for teens to create and display original work reinforces the idea of the library as a valuable resource for teens and strengthens the bond between teens and their library.

The interactive teen displays at Libbie Mill library engage young people through the sharing of emotionally resonant and creative work, active participation in educational games, and connections to reading and popular literature. As opposed to traditional passive programming, which provides an activity and then rewards completion with a prize of some sort, teen patrons can find reward through participating in the teen displays at Libbie Mill. The interactive displays add social, emotional, and intellectual investment to passive programming that establishes connections between teens, the library, and the wider community, in a way that is not daunting for introverts, and that is flexible for teens with transportation or time constraints.

5. Financing and Staffing

Interactive teen displays at Libbie Mill cater to teens with busy schedules and who lack transportation, and are well-suited to the needs of the community surrounding Libbie Mill. The area consists of several working to middle-class neighborhoods, with an above-average poverty rate for the County of Henrico. The high quality of these displays shows that Libbie Mill librarians are making an effort to reach teens from busy, working families, who can't make frequent trips to the library or whose parents' work schedules make attending certain evening and weekend programs impossible. In addition to enabling teens to participate on their own schedule, these innovative passive programming displays provide teens with enrichment opportunities at no cost to them. The displays are designed to be high-impact, with the amount of time required to participate being proportionately less than the cumulative effect of the display.

The Cost of the Program

Program Cost: 2017 Interactive Teen Displays

Post-it Notes (multiple colors and sets)	\$9.74
Construction Paper	\$4.99
Posterboard (multiple colors)	\$6.91
Dry Erase Window Markers (multiple sets)	\$10.26
Origami Paper	\$6.94
Cardstock	\$8.55
Caution Tape	\$9.45
Fake Leaves	\$3.16
Suction Cups (multiple sets)	\$2.50
TOTAL	\$62.50

Interactive teen displays at Libbie Mill Library are created from inexpensive and reusable materials, like the items listed above that were purchased, used, and reused in 2017. These materials can be used for a craft project and reused in a display. Occasionally, materials were purchased specifically for a display, such as poster board or many different colors of Post-it Notes.

Libbie Mill staff invest considerable time into coming up with ideas for the displays and trying them out. Letting teen volunteers take the lead in planning and installing displays not only reduces staff time needed to create these displays, but adds another layer of engagement for teens. Libraries with lower staff levels could use teen volunteers to assist with replicating these displays.

While Libbie Mill Library's displays grew out of a desire to create visual interest on a glass wall, a bulletin board, white board, bare wall, or bookshelf ends could be used just as successfully if the program were to be replicated elsewhere.

6. Program Results

Teen Services staff at Libbie Mill have developed a reputation among teens and library patrons for the creative window displays, with a number of teens and families ensuring they visit the Teen Room every month to interact with the window displays. The displays encourage teens and library staff to interact more and give staff an opening while talking to teens. Teens have also helped to create the displays. By helping to create the displays, scheduling visits in order to participate, and forming relationships with library staff, the displays are enabling teens to take ownership of the library space and develop positive and lasting relationships with the library.

Throughout the year, teen staff have heard many compliments on the displays, including teens wishing that their school library had something similar. Some school librarians have even asked for permission to replicate the displays in their school libraries, and teen staff have shared files and resources with them.

Since teen staff began documenting teen interaction with the displays in June 2016, more than 3,300 people have participated. The most popular displays (with 200 or more participants each month) include the word searches and the annual Post-it Note hearts in February.

The mutable nature of the displays allows the Teen Room to become a responsive space that adapts to teens' needs as they arise. For example, after the events in nearby Charlottesville, teen staff responded by installing a display that included a quote from Harry Potter: "We've all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That's who we really are." Teens were invited to answer the question, "How are you feeling?" More than 115 teens responded, and their answers showcased their dreams, anxieties, confusion, humor, and fears. Some Post-it Note conversations even started as teens left encouraging messages for some of the more disheartening responses.

Below are some reflections on the displays from Teen Services staff at Libbie Mill Library that underscore the social, emotional, and intellectual resonance the displays have with members of the community:

- “The first LGBT Pride Month display struck a chord with a woman (in her 40’s or 50’s?), I remember her complimenting the display and mentioning how much she wished something like that had existed when she was younger.”
- “Another display memory that sticks out is our first ‘What Makes You Happy/Sad’ hearts. We had some really honest and heartbreaking comments. I think this display confirmed just how important our passive displays are and proved that we’re were providing an important space for people to share their inner thoughts.”
- “People who looked at our Banned Books display were often caught making remarks such as, ‘_____ was banned?? What?? WHY??’ and ‘I can’t believe that!’ about certain titles that had been challenged.
- “I remember that some adults (me included!) really enjoyed reading the black-out poetry created by teens. ‘This one is actually really good!’ and the like.”
- “[The] Blind Date with a Book [display] at both times of the year was a success. I watched one kid take 6-7 books with her during the Christmas one!”
- “I remember watching people quiz themselves during Rhi’s Video Game History display.”

7. Brief Summary

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began creating monthly, interactive displays aiming to inform, entertain, and encourage teens to contribute and explore responses.

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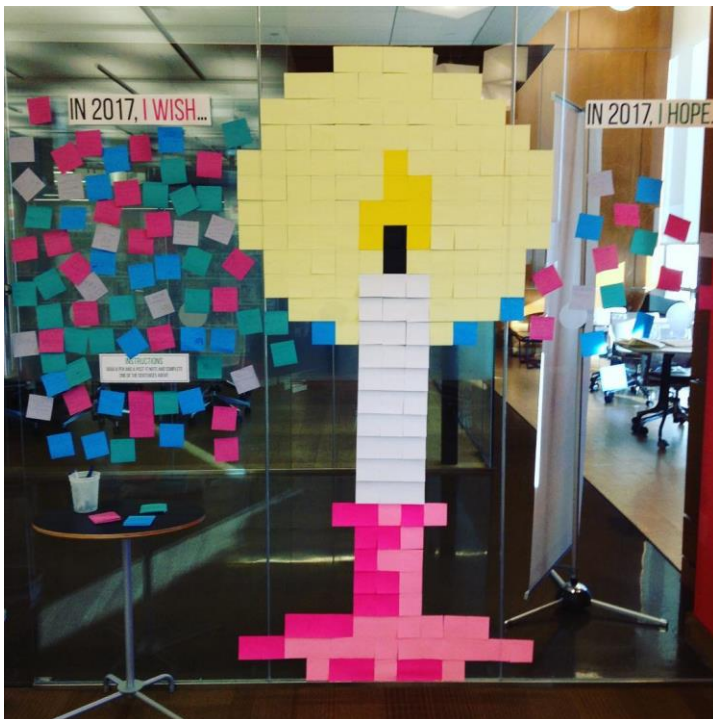
Interactive Teen Displays at Libbie Mill Library



Book Spine Poetry, 2017



Blackout Poetry, 2017



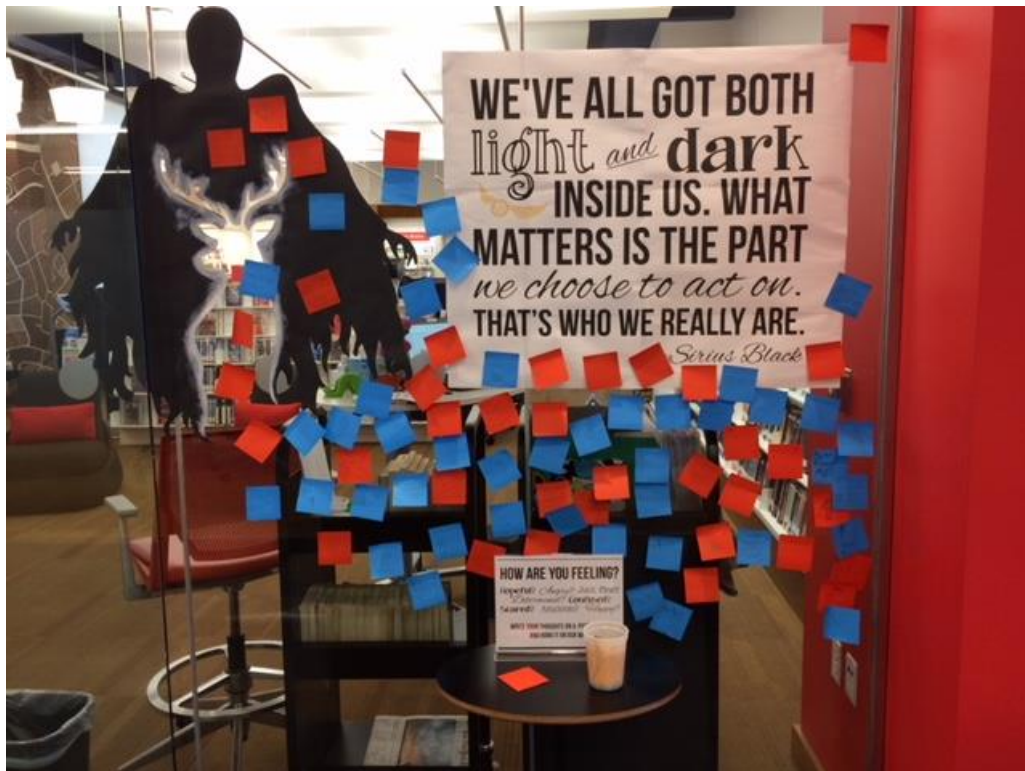
New Year's Wishes, 2017



Wishes detail



Black History Month, 2018



Light and Dark, in response to Charlottesville violence, 2017