

Get with the Program:

Using Social Media to Effectively Increase Teen Patronage
Among Teens Served by the Public Library of Enid and Garfield County

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Introduction

Historically, teens have utilized the Public Library of Enid and Garfield County (PLEGC) at rates lower than their juvenile and adult counter parts. Recently, teen patronage has been lower than normal. It could be speculated that the low patronage of teens at PLEGC is because of social distancing concerns. However, it is also likely that the trend is a general decline in patronage during teen years (Agosto 2015) exacerbated by the current climate. Effectively connecting with teens is crucial for the teen librarian. To do this, the teen librarian must connect with teens in organic ways that encourage teen patronage of the library (Smeaton & Davis 2014). Teens use social media social media to fulfill their information needs as social-emotional and physical needs (Moore 2016). Effectively using social media to connect with teens may be a useful tool to increase teen patronage.

To effectively use social media to connect with teens in the PLEGC service area it is crucial to understand what teens are interested in and how they interact with information in the virtual world. While teens interact with social media in slightly different ways than their adult counterparts there are some similarities between adults and teens in terms of social media usage and its impact on their information seeking habits and behaviors. Previous research based on adult social media habits can therefore be used to inform some aspects of social media outreach to teens. However, simply using the same social media platforms and approaches to reach teens does not appear to effectively reach teens in the PLECG service area.

Research Problem

To bridge the existing information on social media usage in libraries to the PLEGC teen patron population this study will focus on the social media preferences of teens in the PLEGC

service area. The research should answer the following questions and thus inform better utilization of social media to increase teen patronage.

RQ1. Which social media platforms do teens in the PLECG service area report relying on for information?

RQ2. What types of social media content do teens in the PLECG service area respond to?

RQ3. Does increased usage of social media informed by teen self-reporting correlate to increased program and service participation among teens in the PLECG service area?

Methodology

The proposed study will require multiple phases. The initial phase will consist of surveying teens in the PLEGC service area to determine which social media platforms are primarily used by the target group and which types of content are considered high interest by the target group. The sample will consist of voluntary teen participants in the PLEGC service area. Sampling will be obtained through a survey that will be distributed digitally through schools in the target area and via PLEGC's current social media. Additionally, a non-digital version of the survey will be available in the library. Distributing the survey through local schools is expected to increase the sample size beyond teens who currently patronize PLEGC. Using existing social media platforms and an in-library non-digital format will allow participation among current PLEGC patrons including those who do not use digital platforms and social media. The survey begins with an informed consent paragraph explaining the purpose of the survey and that participation is voluntary. The informed consent allows refusal to participate and is required to begin the survey. See Appendix A for the proposed survey including the informed consent document.

The second phase of the study will consist of using data from the surveys to determine which social media platforms to are most likely to reach PLEGC area teens and using those platforms to create social media campaigns. As a control, current social media campaigns will continue to determine whether the platforms reported as preferred by the sample set result in higher levels of teen interactions with social media content as compared to the previously utilized social media platforms. The final phase of the study will consist of comparing teen participation in events at PLEGC and circulations of materials in the young adult (YA) section of the library. The new social media campaign will be determined to be successful if after 3 months teen patronage of PLEGC increases as compared to previous years.

Limitations

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. This means that though the study is designed to ascertain ways to encourage teen patronage of PLEGC, including reaching teens who do not currently use the library, it is possible that those area teens to who are not currently patrons of the library may opt not to participate thereby limiting information to only teens who are current PLEGC patrons. Additionally, because social media is a worldwide platform it may be difficult to ascertain which social media interactions originate in the PLEGC service area. Teens may prefer social media platforms with higher anonymity or create social media profiles with greater anonymity; this could potentially create difficulty is determining whether social media interactions are teen interactions. While participation rates in teen programs at the library will be easy to compare to previous participation rates, PLEGC does not record which patrons borrow which books in such a way as to determine whether teens are responsible for circulations within the YA collection. While it may be theorized that increased patronage of the YA

collection following teen focused social media campaigns is correlated, such an increase cannot confirm that teens are patronizing the collection at a higher rate.

Data Analysis & Presentation

Data in this study will be analyzed in descriptive statistics by percentages of responses and the numbers of occurrences. See Appendix B for sample data analysis spreadsheet. Survey responses will be analyzed to determine which social media platforms teens in the PLEGC service area report using and how participants prefer to receive information. Percentage of participants reporting using each social media platform will be used to determine which social media platforms and methods of information sharing are preferred by teens in the PLEGC service area. Previous, informal surveys indicate the results are likely to total more than 100% as many people use multiple social media platforms and receive information in a variety of ways. For example, the sample charts below originated from a survey in which 263 respondents (n=263) produced 389 results for social media platforms and 468 results for areas of reading interests. Tables and bar graphs will be used to display the comparisons of social media platforms and methods of information sharing are identified by the sample as preferred platforms. Additionally, information about the interests of local teens and whether local teens report patronage of or interest in PLEGC will be analyzed to help inform future phases of the study. Tables and bar graphs such as below will also be used to display results of this data.

Table 1 Teen Reading Interests

Subject Interests	468
Fantasy	124
realistic fiction	93
sci-fi	70
history/historical fiction	64
Romance	51
How to	29
Biographies	25
Self help	12
comix/manga	11
horror	7
I don't read	3
sports	2

Figure 1 Teen Reading Interests

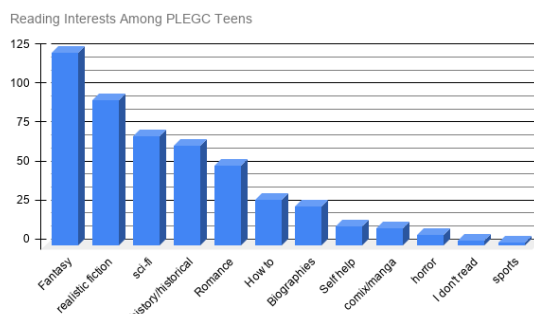


Figure 2 Teen Social Media Preference by Platform

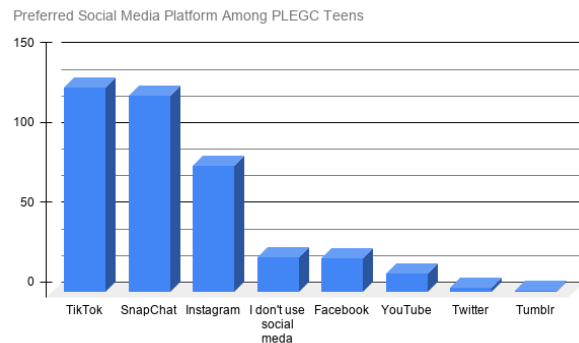


Table 2 Teen Social Media Preference

Social Media Platform	389
TikTok	128
SnapChat	123
Instagram	79
I don't use social media	22
Facebook	21
YouTube	12
Twitter	3
Tumblr	1

In the second and third phases of the study the numbers of positive occurrences during and after the new social media campaigns will be compared to their respective controls. The number of social media interactions on the sample identified preferred social media platforms will be compared to the social media interactions on the social media platforms utilized by PLEGC prior to the study. In addition, the number of interactions on the sample identified social media platforms will be compared to the same data over time to determine whether those social media platforms are growing a following. It is expected that early in the new social media campaigns the number of interactions will be lower than the current social media platforms as social media networks require time and consistency to grow.

Anticipated Results

Currently, PLEGC primarily uses Facebook and Instagram to disseminate information and engage with patrons via social media. It is theorized that these social media platforms are not the preferred social media platforms of teens in the PLEGC service area. It is theorized, according to both anecdotal evidence and previous informal surveys that newer social media platforms such as TikTok and SnapChat will be identified as preferred by teens in the PLEGC service area. It is anticipated that social media campaigns on these platforms will result in higher rates of social media interactions among teens because of higher rates of usage among teens on these platforms. It is currently unclear whether this will correlate to higher rates of patronage of

the YA collection at the PLEGC library. Current patronage rates may be reduced because PLEGC service area teens are currently engaging in social distancing practices which result in less congregating in public spaces, including the library. It is anticipated that increased social media presence will result in higher rates of participation in virtual programming available through PLEGC social media outlets. As the library works to increase patronage both in the physical library and in the online/virtual library space, increased interactions with patrons across platforms will be considered a successful increase of library patronage.

References

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- Smeaton, K., & Davis, K. (2014). Social technologies in public libraries: Exploring best practice. *Library Management*, 35(3), 224-238. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/10.1108/LM-09-2013-0087>

Appendix A

The goal of this survey is to better understand how and why teens in Garfield County use the public library. Your participation will help inform the services provided by the Public Library of Enid and Garfield County. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You may decline or stop at any time you choose without any consequences. The survey is anonymous and cannot be tracked.

The survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about the survey the main researcher is the teen program and services coordinator at the Public Library of Enid and Garfield County, Theri Ray. She can be contacted by email at tray@enid.org, by phone at (580) 616-7181, or at the library.

By continuing this survey, you acknowledge that you understand the survey is voluntary, you may stop at any time, and you wish to participate.

- ☐ I understand and wish to participate
- ☐ I do not wish to participate

I use the library for

- ☐ Reading materials
- ☐ Computers
- ☐ Makerspace
- ☐ Homework
- ☐ A place to hang out with friends
- ☐ To get information
- ☐ Library programs
- ☐ I do not use the library

I know how to use the card catalog to find materials.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree

- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

What types of books do you like?

- ☐ Fantasy
- ☐ Self help
- ☐ How-to
- ☐ Biographies
- ☐ Romance
- ☐ Realistic Fiction
- ☐ Science Fiction
- ☐ Historical Fiction
- ☐ Mystery
- ☐ Dystopian
- ☐ Coming of age
- ☐ Other non-fiction
- ☐ Graphic novels
- ☐ I do not like to read

I want library programs where I learn about

- ☐ Getting ready for college
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Being a writer
- ☐ Healthy relationships
- ☐ Social activism
- ☐ Dealing with paperwork (job applications/taxes/etc.)
- ☐ Computers
- ☐ Science experiments
- ☐ Fixing or building things
- ☐ I am not interested in library programs

I use email as a way to communicate.

- ☐ Yes

- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

I prefer to get information by

- ☐ Text message
- ☐ Google Classroom
- ☐ Remind app
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Flyers/Posters

Which social media platforms do you use to get information?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ SnapChat
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ I don't use social media

How do you like to read for fun?

- ☐ Physical Book
- ☐ E-book
- ☐ Audio book
- ☐ I do not read books for fun

In addition to books I want access to

- ☐ Music
- ☐ Movies
- ☐ Magazines
- ☐ Tools
- ☐ Photography or video equipment

I feel respected when I am in the library.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I don't come to the library

I feel comfortable asking the librarian for help finding information.

- ☐ Extremely comfortable
- ☐ Moderately comfortable
- ☐ Slightly comfortable
- ☐ Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- ☐ Slightly uncomfortable
- ☐ Moderately uncomfortable
- ☐ Extremely uncomfortable
- ☐ This does not apply to me

What social issues are important to you?

- ☐ Racial justice
- ☐ LGBTQIAP+ issues
- ☐ Gender equality
- ☐ Socioeconomic issues
- ☐ Disability issues
- ☐ Other issues
- ☐ I don't worry about this stuff

I am a

- ☐ middle school student
- ☐ high school student

How do you self-identify?

- ☐ Girl
- ☐ Boy
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Fluid
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I want to skip this question

How do you attend school?

- ☐ I attend a public school in the school building
- ☐ I attend a private school

- ☐ I am home schooled
- ☐ I attend school online
- ☐ I do not attend school

What is your cultural identity?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I want to skip this question

Appendix B

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