

What Tweens Want

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For:

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Executive Summary

This report, *What Tweens Want*, culminates the work done by EPL's School-Aged Services Intern Librarian. In late 2015 and early 2016, youth and adult community members were engaged in mixed methods research – interviews, focus groups and letters – to uncover tween library needs and gaps in service. Overall, 136 participants took part in the research, 121 of which were tweens between the ages of 9 and 14. Although initial research design focused on after-school services, discussions and feedback was often applicable to all service hours. The general questions answered by the research include:

- What library services do tweens want and need from EPL?
- What stops tweens from visiting the library?
- How can EPL meet the needs of tweens?
- What type of programs do tweens want and need from EPL?

Findings spanned a considerable breadth of topics, including data on tween developmental needs, suggestions for strengthening community connections and improvements to library services. The resulting recommendations focus on four themes: awareness, spaces, collections and technology, and programs.

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Introduction

What Tweens Want follows up from *Tween Services at EPL*, which sought to better understand how Edmonton Public Library (EPL) is currently serving tween customers. In contrast to the earlier report's internal focus, *What Tweens Want* reflects EPL's commitment to community-led philosophy by engaging local youth and adults in conversations on what they want to see from after-school tween library services. The research data consists of a broad spectrum of feedback on current and prospective library services, much of which stemmed from creative brainstorming in interviews or focus groups.

Definitions

After-school – the hours adjacent to the end of school, during which many youth are left unsupervised. Although early dismissal days change the length of the after-school time period, this time period is generally considered to run from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., and may also be referred to as the *critical hours*.

Tweens – also referred to as *tweenagers*, this project will consider tweens as those youth in grades four to nine (most will be aged 9-14). Alternative definitions place them between the ages of 8 and 14 years old (tweenager, n.d.), while some have a lower limit of 12 years old. In this report, I will use the term *younger tweens* to refer to participants in elementary school (grades 4-6) and *older tweens* to refer to those in junior high school (grades 7-9).

Programs – use of library space marketed by EPL for a designated time period and facilitated by at least one staff member. Programs may be recurring or one-off, and are different from events, which are primarily geared towards promotion of (or fundraising for) the library or are significant one-off attempts to reach out to our community (EPL Foundational Programming Team, 2015).

After-school recreation programs – any child and youth recreation-based programming that is offered between the hours of 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm Monday – Friday, 3-5 days a week, during the school year. These programs are purposefully delivered and are intended to improve the social and developmental outcomes of children and youth, by increasing participation in quality recreation and other activities” (Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, 2009, p. 4).

Out of school time (or OST) - References all time away from school, including weekends and school breaks, and is thus more comprehensive than the term *after-school*.

Research Goals

The objective of the project is to make EPL a first choice location for after-school tween learning and social development. In order to accomplish this, needs and gaps in service were studied to inform service improvements. The project's research questions include:

- What after-school library services do tweens want and need from EPL?
- What stops tweens from visiting the library after-school?
- How can EPL meet the needs of tweens, after-school?
- What type of after-school programs do tweens want and need from EPL?

These questions aimed to garner exploratory data that complement the internal assessment of EPL's services in the researcher's preceding report, *Tween Services at EPL*. While questions were framed to specify after-school service needs, participants often discussed their needs and desires more broadly. As a result, findings were often applicable to all service time periods, and not simply after-school.

Literature Review

Importance of After-School Programs

The time periods directly succeeding the schoolday are considered to be so vital to behavioural development that they are often referred to as "critical hours" (Tink, 2011). It is during these time frames, before parents return home from work, when many youth spend a number of unsupervised hours unencumbered by curfews of school constraints (Atkin et al., 2008). For those in after-school programs, girls tend to engage in a greater variety of activities than boys (as summarized in Metsäpelto & Pulkkinen, 2014). After-school programs are generally considered to have positive effects on youth development (Dabney et al., 2012), and the Harvard Family Research Project (2008) has found that after-school programs can improve academic success, youth social and developmental outcomes, positively impact prevention outcomes, and contribute to healthy lifestyles. Access to adult mentorship, sustained contact with positive peers, exploration of interests and opportunities for supportive skill building all within the confines of a safe space are some of the features on offer in out-of-school programs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000). Additionally, exposure to both structured activities and a community adult has been linked to higher optimism and self-esteem among children (Schonert-Reichl & Rowcliffe, 2011). Greater effects are noted with sustained

attendance, and youth often stay in programs if they are with friends or making new friends (as summarized in Fredricks & Simpkins, 2013).

The critical hours are considered as an important part of health and safety, skill development and academic achievement for youth, and nearly 30% of all youth crime occurs in those timeframes (Clyne & Wilson, 2012; Hartman, 2011; MacRae et al., 2008; UpStart Calgary, 2009). In the 2008 Roots of Violence report conducted and completed for the Ontario government, authors Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling argue that improving participation in recreation and after-school programs is a critical element of any commitment to youth crime prevention and community development. In fact, habitual young offenders have almost never participated in adult-supervised after-school activities (MacRae et al., 2008).

Tweens are particularly underserved, as most after-school enrichment programs and out-of-school care serve those younger than 10, while youth community subsectors focus on those high school age or older (Sefton-Green, 2013). Furthermore, multiple studies have confirmed that junior high age students are more likely than those in adjacent age groups to go straight home or stay at school once the formal school-day has completed (Clifton, 2003; McDonald, 2005, Paleti, Copperman & Bhat, 2010). In a study of 1,402 children in British Columbia's Lower Mainland, Schonert-Reichl and Rowcliffe (2011) found that between grades 4/5 and 6/7, children exhibit decreases in social-emotional well-being and spend increased amounts of time at home. The tween years are a particularly crucial stage in a child's social and intellectual development.

Despite anecdotal claims that most youth are overscheduled, youth who aren't privileged enough to be enrolled in cost-based activities can spend an average of 20-25 hours of discretionary time on their own each week (Alberta Recreation and Parks Organization, 2009; UpStart Calgary, 2009). In Shann's 2001 study of inner-city middle schoolers, 90% of her participants spent at least one hour watching television on weeknights, and 30% spent more than four hours. Multiple studies have found that children from low income families are less likely to participate in after-school activities than children from middle and high income families (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Dearing et al., 2009; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Wimer et al., 2008.) Yet needs may be greater for youth from low income communities in which the neighbourhood is perceived as unsafe to play outside (Holt et al., 2009; Pate & O'Neil, 2009). Transportation and cost are the most significant barriers to accessing critical hours programs, but lack of accessible facilities or lack of the program's benefits, as perceived by adults, also affect attendance (Schonert-Reichl & Rowcliffe, 2011; Upstart Calgary, 2009). As a result, challenges persist in providing

equitable access for all children to access the supportive environments at after-school programs (Guhn et al., 2012).

The generalizability of after-school program research has been questioned, however. Guhn et al. (2012) state that the inability to generalize this research stems from the need to consider local social and cultural context factors, which lead to mismatches between program objectives and community needs, resistance to program implementation and even lack of program integrity. Intner (2011) even argues that programming should avoid being too heavily based on literature to avoid a school-like atmosphere. The diversity of activities that are included in out-of-school time research might also make it difficult to identify effective programs or tactics for any given context (Dabney et al., 2012). Thus, while research evidence from literature can strengthen the case for local action (Guhn et al., 2012; Rogers, 1995), this report features primary research that deploys, reflects and integrates Edmonton Public Library's Community-Led Service Philosophy.

After-school at Libraries

Libraries started to become popular after-school bases in the 1990s, as parents searched for a safe space for their children to spend time (Halpern, 2003). In these hours, youth are permitted with the rare opportunity to access and use a resource that is open to all members of society (Sullivan, 2013). Libraries provide digital and print media that are often unavailable at home, where youth can mess around with resources and form social bonds outside their local friendship groups (Antin & Itō, 2010). Moreover, the convenience, safety and freedom of libraries makes them natural gathering spaces for youth after-school, despite a pervasive acknowledgement that libraries cannot be substitutes for child care (Hartman, 2011). Hartman argues that, "even in libraries that do very little formal programming, [libraries] still have many elements that afterschool programs have – caring adults, access to technology, and opportunities to socialize with friends" (2011, p. 11). The Urban Libraries Council held the first after-school programming conference in the US in 2006, at which speakers noted the need to strengthen collaboration with community agencies, improve staff training and seek to refine program assessments (Barber & Wallace, 2006).

However, after-school relations between library staff and their school-aged customers have not always been positive. In 2006, a library in Ohio banned unaccompanied children under 15 years old in the after-school hours, while other library systems have required daily permission slips or even closed the library at this time (Kelly, 2007). As public spaces, libraries have inherent dangers, and staff might be seen as having limited authority as compared to school environments

(Sullivan, 2013). When youth spend lengthy durations in library branches, these issues are exacerbated, as libraries lack the resources to discharge care over long periods of time (Sullivan, 2013).

Libraries' after-school services are often considered in view of their support of formal education and, specifically, homework. Unlike schools, library staff work in response to customers' needs and wishes, and do not have a vested interest in improving test scores or reaching assessment objectives (Intner, 2011). As a result, the draw to students are the library's digital and physical resources and collections, work spaces and staff help (Squires, 2009; Intner, 2011). After six hours of structured time at school, youth can feel overprogrammed, and Fredricks, Bohnert and Burdette (2014) suggest that after-school programs should seek to complement, and not extend, the formal learning day.

Methods

Identifying Age Group

As the researcher's title is School-Aged Services Intern Librarian, the definition of school-age needed to be further defined. EPL's School-Aged Services Team (2016) specifies its focus on service for school-aged children in "grades K-9" in its terms of reference. Similarly, the Association for Library Services to Children's School-Age Programs and Services Committee offers booklists for grades K-8 (2016).¹ Dictionaries typically define and limit school-age by the lower boundary, often stating that these are children that are old enough, or are required, to attend school (school-age, n.d.a; school-age, n.d.b; school age, n.d; school-age child, n.d.).

A few factors contributed to the decision to limit research participation beyond the broad school-aged range. As the demarcation of grades differs between jurisdictions, a local perspective was required. Alberta has four school divisions, which are separated as follows:

Division	Grades	School System
1	1-3	Elementary school
2	4-6	
3	7-9	Junior high school
4	10-12	High school

Source: Alberta Education, 2010

¹ This different age range is likely as a result of the American model of middle school, which generally runs from grades 6-8, whereas in Alberta junior high runs from grades 7-9.

These distinctions act to construct the local identity of age groupings, and provide natural classifications for targeted service improvements. Furthermore, an ad-hoc EPL High School Completion Team is contemporaneously focusing its efforts on services for Division 4 students. In order to contribute to the learning of more independent students, Division 1 students were omitted from this project, resulting in the study of Division 2 and 3 students: grades 4-9, and mostly those aged 9-14. This corresponds to a broader definition to tweens, as described in the Definitions section.

Data Collection

As the research goals focus on customer needs and gaps in service, meaningful research data needed to probe deeply to retrieve a deeper reflection on the topic. This necessitated the use of qualitative research "to try to identify and gain analytic insight into the dimensions and dynamics of the phenomenon being studied" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 81). Two methods were selected: interviews for adult participants and focus groups for youth participants. Focus groups were preferred for youth participants to offset researcher-participant power imbalances and leverage recruitment (Oberg & Ellis, 2006; Smithson, 2000); as youth could be recruited through groups at schools and community agencies, increasing research participants in this manner was logical. Adult participants were recruited individually, meaning focus groups would have been far more difficult to logistically manage.

Participant recruitment was conducted in various ways, and always included circulation of a Research Information Letter (Appendix A). The following table illustrates the recruitment and selection of research participants.

Target Group	Recruitment Methods
Tweens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-school recreation leaders • Out-of-school care program leaders • School administrators² • EPL programs
Parents of tweens³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-of-mouth from EPL Staff

² Conducting research through schools required approval of a research approval from school board authorities

³ Social media announcements from EPL Twitter and Facebook accounts garnered zero parent participants, and have thus been excluded from the following table.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement at local care provider meeting
After-school program leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations suggested by EPL Community and Youth Services Librarians

Researching with human subjects can be messy and unpredictable. In this case, some recruited participants ceased communication after stating an initial interest, and youth challenges were amplified due to the third-party guardian consent process. Multiple focus groups with after-school recreation programs were cancelled due to low enrolment, though schools generally had an easier time recruiting participants. Unfortunately, these issues appeared to be exacerbated for youth living in lower socioeconomic areas of the city, where parents were less likely to be picking up or dropping off children at programs. In these cases, consent forms sometimes had little chance of surviving the trip from the program, to the parent, and back again, and may also have been considered lower priority in the child's busy day. Sample assent and consent forms are in Appendices B and C, respectively.

As compared to the preceding tween research report, *What Tweens Want* was designed with the intent to gather information that detailed the depths of participants' thoughts and experiences. Questions were intentionally broad, and the bulk of conversations came from probing questions rather than initial, formally written questions. Interviews and focus groups lasted for roughly 50 minutes, on average. Question guides for both interviews and focus groups differed between four different recruitment groups – parents, program leaders, EPL program participants, and non-EPL program youth.

In addition to the planned recruitment avenues, a serendipitous source of data appeared towards the end of data collection. A local junior high school language arts teacher was handed a copy of the Research Information Letter, and she ran a group discussion with her students that led into an individual assignment. In late February, 43 students from two grade seven classes sent formal letters to the researcher, outlining their responses to the research questions. In each letter, the students outlined one to four suggestions that would improve the library for their age group. These letters were amalgamated with the interview and focus group transcripts, and added significantly to the body of data.

Youth focus groups

Youth focus groups were run flexibly and differed between each session. In certain cases, these changes accommodated shorter time slots allotted by the school, while others were adapted to fit the age, demographic, or remaining research questions on which the researcher desired closer focus. A sample youth focus group guide from this study can be found in Appendix D.

Generally, youth focus groups included two activities in addition to standard questions: drawing and dotmocracy. At the outset of the focus group, participants were given large sheets of paper to draw their “ideal library.”⁴ This activity was adapted from Ellis (2006), who suggests drawing as a pre-interview technique to serve as a base for the participants’ stories, and “provide a concrete referent for language and...thereby help the [youth] and the researcher to find shared meaning for the language they use together” (p.120). Due to time constraints, large sample size, and one-time access to youth participants, the drawing activity was done during the focus group, rather than prior to it. With an optional task in front of them, participants could ease their way into the environment by committing focus to the drawing. Moreover, youth could use the drawing as a productive activity in case their attention to the discussion was waning. Most vitally, the drawing activity permitted the researcher with a natural opportunity to “express genuine interest in what the child has to say”, and therefore reduce barriers to discussion quality by building trust in the researcher-participant relationship (Ellis, 2006, p. 120).⁵

The dotmocracy activity occurred towards the end of the focus group.⁶ For dotmocracy, the researcher presented three to four service suggestions to the focus group, written on pieces of paper. When time permitted, participants were invited to add ideas for service suggestions; this option was extended to seven focus groups. Once all suggestions were written down, participants were permitted to vote on services they agreed with or would use by placing a sticker on each idea. Participants could vote on as many activities as they wanted, and discussion on their choices followed the voting process. Dotmocracy was intentionally placed at the end of the discussion to avoid biasing or limiting participants’ discussion towards the options presented by the researcher.

⁴ In four focus groups, the library drawing task was omitted due to time constraints.

⁵ Digitized library drawings, along with transcriptions from the tweens as they described their art, are hosted on Flickr at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskxrSJSF>.

⁶ In two focus groups, Dotmocracy was omitted due to time constraints.

Adult interviews

In contrast to the youth focus groups, the adult interviews were more standard to the form and did not feature additional exercises. However, like the focus groups, adult interviews were designed with a high degree of flexibility that permitted deeper analysis of responses and casual flow of conversation rather than strict adherence to a script of questions. Two populations were targeted: after-school recreation program and out-of-school care leaders, and parents. The first group was selected for its specialized knowledge and focus on critical hour programming and service provision, and parents were selected due to their influence on tween behaviour. Interview guides for parents and program leaders can be found in Appendices E and F.

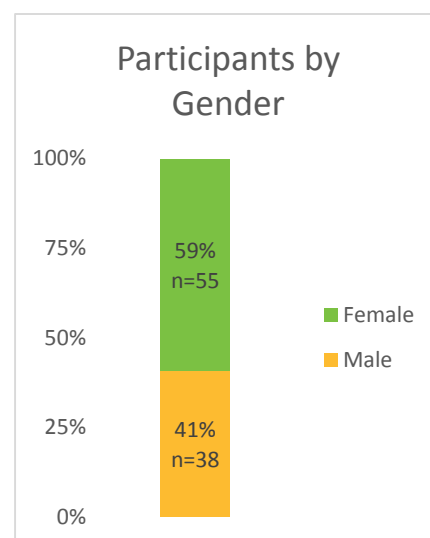
Data Analysis

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded, with the consent and, when suitable, assent of participants. Summary transcripts were prepared from all audio recordings; these were preferred to verbatim transcription to save time without compromising the credibility of the data (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Once transcription was done, research data were coded by theme using the software package *QSR NVivo 10*. The process of data analysis was completed “by working recursively through the many pieces of data [to] come to a deeper understanding of the whole” (de Groot, 2009, p. 65).

Sample

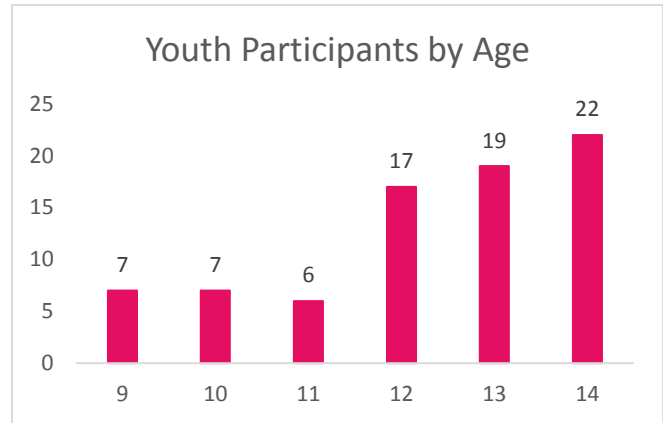
In total, 136 youth and adults participated in this research study, including 93 through 13 interviews and 17 focus groups.⁷ Demographic data were not provided for the 43 students who sent in letters, so the following breakdowns only reflect focus group and interview participants.

This study had more female (55) than male (38) participants for both tweens (46 females to 32 males) and adults (9 females to 6 males). Parent participants, however, had nine tween sons as compared to two tween daughters.

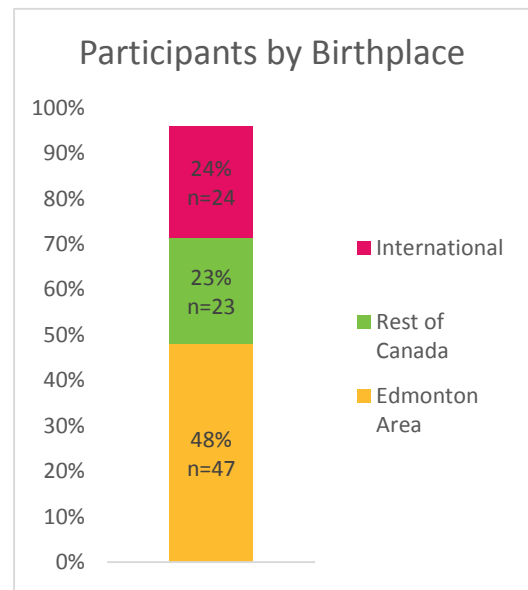


⁷ In two cases, when interviewees knew each other, interviews were conducted simultaneous with two participants.

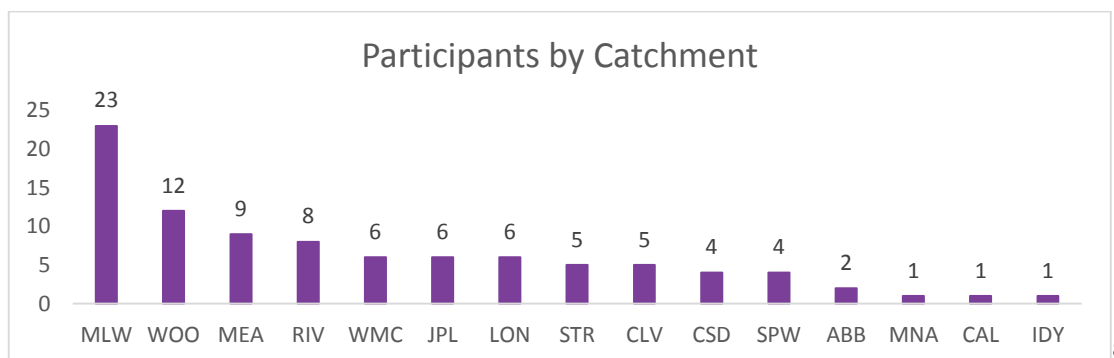
A larger number of junior high participants were selected, as they were generally better at articulating needs and service improvements than younger tweens. This recruitment strategy was balanced by the fact that adult perspectives more commonly represented younger tweens, as out-of-school care and recreation program leaders generally supported this age group, and nine of the 11 children of parent participants were younger tweens.



47 participants were born in the Edmonton area, 23 were born in the rest of Canada and 24 were born internationally. Participants from countries with multiple participants included India (7), Philippines (4), United States of America (3), Somalia (3) and Nigeria (2).



For all tween and after-school program leaders, catchment was assessed based on school or program location. For parent participants, home catchment came up through the course of the interview, either with mention of the library or the location of their home. Although certain catchments had higher participation than others, generally, there was participation from all quadrants of the city.



⁸ For a legend of EPL branch codes, see Appendix G.

Participants were all given the opportunity to produce their own pseudonym, which was changed by the researcher in cases of duplication with another participant's name or pseudonym.

Findings

The research data featured highly diverse opinions and suggestions. Conversations were intentionally open-ended to assess the services of greatest importance to the participants, rather than gauging the response to the researcher's suggestions. Data from all participants have been divided into themes, and the following findings have been structured to reflect those themes.

Tween Needs and Desires

Independence

Adult participants discussed that tweens are at an age where they experience greater opportunities to develop their independence and freedom, both physically and mentally. At some point in the tween years, they noted that families start to provide opportunities for their children to spend time alone; a phenomenon that is specifically vital for junior high students, as they no longer qualify for after-school care. It is during this age that parent participants saw their children as developing their own interests, and being provided with greater opportunities to express those interests. Gertrude contrasts how these freedoms are limited for tweens:

[My children are] looking out into the world and are starting to see the options they can access now. They need an adult to ...somehow facilitate their ability to go out in the world and become engaged in things. They want...to be able to try new things and see different things, but they can't necessarily get there or do that [by themselves].

Participants also raised the importance of personal expression to tweens as a companion to increased freedoms. Tweens indicated their desire to share their opinions at the library, such as sharing book reviews both online and in branches. The library was viewed as a place of choice where tweens can experiment with individuality through selecting items based on their personal interests.

Both adult and tween participants recognized tweens' role as child care providers for younger siblings. In some cases, these tweens are occupied in the after-school hours, as they are expected to chaperone and care for younger siblings until parents get home from work. Others might bring their siblings to the library, such as Christine, age 14, who stated "My favourite part [of the library] is seeing my little

siblings have fun and enjoying themselves.” Some tweens also conveyed that they wanted younger kids to have fun in the library, and many participants designed play areas or material sections for younger kids as important spaces in their ideal libraries. This served as a solution to noise or interruption from younger kids in the library, some said, and three participants suggested creating a daycare or similar space to separate younger kids from tweens.

Once the highly structured school-day ends, some participants discussed the need for tweens to experience periods with less structure to permit personal expression of interests and beliefs. As tweens progress towards their teen years, participants mentioned decreases in structure as a strategy to both increase responsibility and ensure they return to an after-school program. For her younger son, however, Wendy bemoaned the passivity and lack of structure with which a staff member ran the program:

There was no group activity that brings people together. Maybe something as simple as a name tag to know people’s names. Maybe a group activity at the beginning...I think kids at that age are a bit reticent to introduce themselves – having that help from facilitators to bring them together and maybe even suggest roles.

Providing youth with opportunities to shape the progress of programs was mentioned by after-school leaders as vital to fostering tween program ownership. Paul demonstrated how he frames activities as “Hey, we want to do this, will you join us?” or “Hey I have this, let’s figure it out” to harness their energy and address the power dynamics of a room. As for tween participants, they expressed enjoyment in having the chance to share their ideas in the focus groups, and wanted tangible outcomes from their suggestions. Some even suggested involving teen staff in programming; as Cherie, age 13, said: “A teen understands a teen.”

In some dotmocracy sessions, tweens were asked for their opinion on volunteering opportunities at the library. Junior high participants were generally enthusiastic about this idea, and liked the idea of giving back to their communities and improving their future employability. Moreover, some students remarked on their difficulty in finding suitable opportunities to fulfill their service hour requirements, particularly for those students who don’t live in their school’s neighbourhood and have trouble accessing the locally posted listings. When asked the type of volunteer opportunities they would like to see, tweens mentioned tutoring peers or younger students, mentoring in reading-based programs with a younger buddy, and acting as library tour guides.

Safety

A few participants praised the library as a safe space – a place where parents feel comfortable leaving their children that is removed from negative influences that might exist in their communities. Others, however, looked at ways to improve the safety of libraries for tweens. Sofia discussed that “for some it’s a safe space; for others it’s not – they might have been jumped there in the past.” These fears were echoed by certain youth, who mentioned feelings of intimidation from peers or older students at the library. Suggestions to improve security included adding security personnel at branches, increasing the number of cameras, and having staff rove around the library more often. Adult supervision was reported as important for both tween safety and confidence, and this supervision accrued positive impacts by simply promoting a healthy image and caring for tween customers’ safety and well-being. In recognition of the balance required from this supervision, Raul voiced that the tweens *“will figure out their own activities, but [need] just general adult supervision...it’s kind of like a security blanket.”*

Busyness

As a result of their busy lives, many tweens look forward to finding time to relax in the after-school hours. Rani, age 12, stated, *“A long day of school can get tiring, and most us want a bit of time to relax.”* Phrases such as “chill out” and “kick back” were used by multiple participants, and the library was frequently mentioned as a good place to decompress from their busy lives. Often, tweens looked to relax with friends, but it might also be a solitary activity as Liya, age 14, demonstrated here:

At the Meadows [branch] there are these chairs, like, right beside a window and I like that because then you get to see everything’s that’s going on outside, and I can almost, like, make my brain loose – like grab a magazine or something. It’s not even, like, strict reading. It’s just kinda like...chilling, by yourself.

Food

Food was one of the most common discussion themes, and it appeared as a topic of conversation in 12 of the 16 focus groups. After-school program leaders stated that having food is imperative to the success of their programs, given that by 3 p.m. it has been hours since lunch. Sofia mentioned that “when [our program] didn’t do snacks, the kids were hungry and grumpy.” Some leaders mentioned that, while certain tweens truly need the food, others will want it at any time. Many tweens mentioned that they get hungry while spending time at the library, and food was a

consistent feature of the tweens' ideal library drawings. Participants also discussed food options as a way to attract new customers to the library, and as a factor that would improve their work habits. Zehra, age 12, shared that *“I myself am the type of person who can't work without having something to drink or eat...I'd like spending my time in libraries if I could always have an easy access to getting some appetizers.”*

Many tweens highlighted that the food should be free. In terms of delivery, vending machines, food courts, coffee shops and cafeterias were all brought up, with coffee shops being the most commonly suggested option. Some participants mentioned that the coffee shop might be an attractive option for parents to spend time while their children enjoyed the library. Rather creatively, a Timbit dispenser was discussed in two groups, though this may have related to the fact that the researcher brought Timbit donuts as a thank you to focus group participants. Mess associated with food concerned a few participants, and some considered a compromise by having options outside of the actual library. Shirin, age 14, stated, “Even if you don't have a food court or café in the library, then at least have a food place nearby.”

Social Needs

Lisa, an after-school program leader, noted that “You've got to have food and their friends.” In her opinion, these two elements are essential to a successful tween program, and many tweens discussed the need for friends to be present before they join an activity. Fulfilling social needs was key to making activities fun, though after-school program leaders discussed that for tweens with higher needs who lacked a different place to be, participation is less contingent on the presence of friends and they find satisfaction in the companionship, food and space each day at the program. Younger tween participants expressed greater interest in meeting people, and looked forward to expanding their initial engagement to a more significant relationship. One parent participant hoped that the library would supplement unfulfilled social needs from school by providing her son with opportunities to meet people who share his interests.

The impact of technology on the social lives of tweens came up multiple times in the research. On one hand, tween participants discussed how they preferred to play video games with friends, which gave them the chance to play on teams and strategize together. Some parents considered the collaborative spirit of video and computer gaming, and one considered Minecraft to be a more social pursuit for her son than LEGO. Others expressed concerns with what they viewed as the isolating effects of technology, which locked-in youth solely to the screen.

In addition to social needs, many tweens designed their ideal libraries with outlets for physical activities. Younger tweens in lower socioeconomic regions were more likely to draw these amenities, which included waterparks, trampolines, dance studios, parks and climbing walls. Adult participants expressed the need for tweens to burn off all that sitting after-school, though they did not convey this need in relation to the library.

Creativity Needs

Enabling the creativity of young minds through the provision of space, resources and programming was a common theme of the interviews and focus groups. Nobe, age 11, discussed the library's role in fostering creativity: "Maybe you don't have the stuff they have at the program at home, or you don't know how to do them, so you can come here to do [that activity]." This level of engagement, as parent participants noted, permits tweens to move beyond mere consumers of technology, and towards becoming producers of technology. While individual tweens commented on their interest in writing and woodworking, the most commonly shared outlets for creativity included art, music and technology.

An interest in opportunities to practice or express themselves through art was raised by focus group participants. Running both passive programs, such as providing supplies in a certain area of the library, and active programs, such as an artist running art classes, were both mentioned. Tweens mostly reported opportunities to engage with non-tech art, though some did communicate an interest in working with computer design programs.

In addition to visual art, music was mentioned by tweens who desired opportunities to create, record and mix music at the library. A soundroom with appropriate acoustic and soundproofing paneling was described as a desirable space, along with available instruments for customers to use. Cherie, age 13, further illustrates what this space might entail: "A soundroom...[where] you can go in, play some music, interview people and all that." As with art opportunities, tweens mentioned the potential for technology to enhance and extend their creativity.

Yet technology as a specific vehicle for creativity, through the use of digital product, was also discussed by tweens. Programming robots and coding websites were discussed as desirable opportunities, along with mixed experiences such as creating book trailers or movie editing. Namratha, age 12, expressed her interest in a cartoon studio:

Some of us are just dying to make our own cartoons. Here's how it would work, on certain days you will gather some kids, then you will have them draw their cartoon on paper. Then you will teach them how to animate their creations using computers or animation sets. This studio will have everything like an area to make stop motion movies and an area to plan out cartoons

Participants had an interest in sharing their creations with friends and family, both within and outside the library. By having the library display artwork, or even Lego or films created by tweens, participants articulated that this might inspire or motivate other customers to participate in making or creating at the library. For some, displaying artwork was also desired to improve the aesthetic qualities of library branches.

Community Connections

Collaboration with Agencies and Schools

Both tween and adult participants viewed the library as a community gathering place; a local connector to talent, resources and support within neighbourhoods or the larger city. Asad discussed how cultural organizations have stronger access and communications with their communities, while larger organizations like the library have access to resources:

Connect with ethnic groups in the area...you will have access to people, and will then help people. The link between resources and the people is missing. Resources are available [through the library], and people are missing. You have to see who can connect that link.

Parent participants also discussed an interest for the library to collaborate with local cultural and educational organizations to offer programming, particularly to reach youth who have difficulty accessing these opportunities. Specific organizations and professionals that were mentioned included comic shops, the ballet, symphony, fashion designers and artists. Annalisa said "I think there's amazing talent within our kids, and their parents or school do not have any access or knowledge to connect them." Multiple parents discussed the library leveraging its goodwill within the community to foster these connections.

As the organization that is embedded in the lives of most youth, participants considered the possibilities for EPL to collaborate with schools. Jonathan and Paul mentioned the power of being physically present in schools to raise awareness of

EPL programs and services, perhaps through a regularly scheduled time in the school library. Moreover, maintaining strong contacts within school had greater rewards, as Paul noted, *“If you have people affirming your program within the school, that does a lot...validation from a second valued opinion is huge.”*

Access

Financial Access

Many participants touched on the importance of the library providing free access – to its collections, technological resources and programs – and some called for an expansion of complimentary services, such as printing, music lessons and food. The lack of free programs for youth in the city was raised by certain participants, as well as how this gap in access affects low-income families.

Similarly, both tween and adult participants discussed the impact of late fees on access to library services. Tween participants viewed late fees as unfair or unjust, which clashed with their view of the library as a free service. In addition, others discussed how busy lives can complicate returning books to the library on time. Asad described “This family stopped going to the library because they didn’t want to pay anymore. Now they go to the library and just read books there. So I say, ‘Who is getting punished?’ It’s the child that wants to read books.” High late fees barred participants’ acquaintances from reactivating their cards, and two of the research participants are no longer library customers as a result of difficulties they experienced in managing due dates for multiple children’s books.

Physical Access

Transporting youth to the library, after-school, was a major challenge for some participants. Working parents are unable to drive their children to the library right after-school, and for single parents or parents who cannot drive, larger barriers exist. After-school program leaders described going door-to-door to walk youth to the program, or relying on the provision of transit tickets if their program was located at a non-school location. Most tweens in after-school care are unable to access EPL services after-school, as their programs face barriers in transporting a large number of youth to the library. Program leaders requested that the library consider increasing outreach services during the school year to connect their youth to the library. Other tweens mentioned that visiting the library after-school wasn’t worth the trouble to them unless there was a specific reason to visit. Shirin, stated that she doesn’t go because, “There’s not really one close to me. *It’s such a hassle to go to a library after-school when you can just go home.*”

Some tweens called for libraries to be built in more neighbourhoods to improve access for them and their peers. Furthermore, they expressed a desire for Maker technology and resources to be available at branches outside of the central, downtown branch. Once again, transportation was a barrier to accessing the downtown Makerspace, and Annalisa noted, “Stanley A. Milner [library] is fantastic, but if you’re a working parent in the suburbs like me, it’s difficult to get your kids after work, drive them downtown and fit everything else in.” Others lamented EPL’s relative focus on the downtown library despite the fact that more tweens reside in the city’s outlying neighbourhoods.

Many tweens praised the placement of new EPL branches in shared-use buildings with community recreation centres. Christine stated “I think it’s a really good idea to have the library at a rec centre, too, because when you get out of the pool if you don’t want to go home, you can go to the library.” Multiple participants discussed how convenient it is for their family to swing by the library before or after sport practices. Moreover, tweens mentioned that proximity to other amenities, such as malls or shopping centres, would permit adults to run errands or busy themselves while their children stayed at the library.

Awareness

Roughly three-quarters of the way through each adult interview, the researcher presented each participant with an overview of current EPL after-school tween services. Responses to this presentation were often filled with surprise as to the extent, technological innovation or remote accessibility of EPL services, and some participants mentioned how, even as active EPL customers, they hadn’t heard of these services. Angeline added, “If I don’t know about them, and I like to think I know about what’s happening in the community, there are lots of parents who don’t know about it either.” In one focus group, tweens were brainstorming ideas to improve the library; after they had discussed for a period of time, the researcher solicited feedback on similar programs that EPL already offered. Matt, age 14, said “I think advertisements are the biggest deal here, because everything we’ve come up with so far, you’re already doing and already have.” Without community awareness, the program has no viability; to this point, Justin noted *“If it’s there and I don’t know about it, that’s no help to me.”*

Tween participants mentioned seeing school presentations for two EPL programs – Young Readers’ Choice Awards (YRCA) and Summer Reading Club (SRC). Class presentations were generally considered to be an effective way of raising awareness of services. Some tweens noted that it didn’t seem as though library advertisements were targeted for people their age, and desired eye-catching design

that differ from adult templates. Furthermore, tween participants stated that library advertisements might focus on highlighting the more innovative, tech-based programs, or change the perception that its only programs are storytimes for little kids. Gertrude mentioned that parents might need to be reminded to take their older kids to the library, even to swing by for a brief moment to take out materials. After a visit to the library during the previous summer, her 10 year-old daughter had said, “I forgot how fun it was to go to the library!”

There were after-school program leaders who knew of EPL branch program calendars, and some even circulated or integrated these with their own agency calendars. Others expressed an interest for information that was tailored to their demographics or interests, including Wendy, who requested a newsletter or a personal introduction to services for her family when she signed up for a library card. Similarly, EPL digital resource outreach presentations were praised for raising awareness, particularly for community agencies who could then spread that information to their clients. Josie, age 14, agreed and added that, “The computers should have more about what the library offers on them. For some of the programs online, I didn’t know I could use them if I had a library card. I thought I had to pay for them, and I didn’t want to do that.”

Parent participants mentioned the potential use of school management systems such as SchoolZone or PowerSchool to raise parental awareness, though perhaps through more specific class channels rather than school-wide broadcasts. Magan suggested a family open house day for branches, at which “They present library resources that people might not know about, the whole day, with sessions at different times.” Other marketing streams that were raised included email, radio, newspaper and billboards by adults, and YouTube and television advertisements by tweens.

Homework

The library’s role in formal education was a common topic of interest for participants, ranging from homework space and resources to homework help programs. Adult participants also discussed the difficulty some tweens face at maintaining attention and focus on assignments, particularly as compared to more appealing options such as video games. In these cases, many parents instituted boundaries with tech use that they viewed as necessary for their children to maintain focus and succeed with their schoolwork.

Space and Resources for Homework

In certain families, participants noted that home is not always a conducive place for studying or completing homework. Some participants noted the difficulty tweens have in focusing in busy home environments, such as Asad, who stated, *“If parents have a larger family...they don’t have a separate place [for their kids] to study – each room might have 2-3 people living in it. In that regard, the only way they’re learning is if they go to the library.”*

Additionally, participants noted the resources that tweens might lack to complete homework at home, including computers, internet connections or video recording equipment. Although many viewed the library as a peaceful, positive environment in which they could focus or ask staff for help finding resources, some noted the noise levels in the library as having a negative effect on their study environment.

Spaces for homework and studying were more commonly brought up by older tweens than younger tweens. For certain participants, finding adequate homework space proved difficult in the after-school hours, when table space and computers are at a premium. Calls for increases to large tables for spreading out with work were also echoed by suggestions that libraries include more cubicles for those who prefer solitary, private work. Moreover, study space in quiet rooms was considered to be insufficient. Relatedly, some were beset with a choice between a positive work environment in the study rooms and the resources they needed at the computers. It was common for these tweens to request that computers be placed in the study rooms to help them complete work in a quieter atmosphere. Otherwise, one dotmocracy session assessed the interest in having laptops available for in-library use. Participants praised the portability of these devices, along with tablets and hybrid models, which would permit them to move around the library, with or without friends, to new spaces that suited them.

Junior high school-aged tweens also brought up the need for group project space, which becomes more common as students reach higher grades. It can be difficult for tweens to find a good space for working in larger groups, which can be further complicated by the fact that teacher-assigned group members are often not close friends. Bakhtawar, age 12, related how, “Some people don’t have room in their house or enough time to prepare for guests. Parents would love the idea of just taking their kids to the library instead of preparing for visitors.” As a solution, participants suggested creating group study spaces specifically for their age group. These study spaces would have multiple resources available such as printers, tape, laminators, tablets or computers that would reduce barriers to completing work.

Homework Help and Support

Some tween participants had sufficient help at home, or preferred to do homework without support. Leroy, age 12, describes, “I’d rather just have a soundproof room where you could study rather than have an adult teaching you stuff. I want to do my own thing.” For these tweens, homework help at the library was not an option that held their interest.

Other participants, however, desired some form of homework help at the library, like Jeevan, age 12, who said *“I sometimes really have trouble in my homework and I don’t have anyone that can help me.”* Participants noted a number of reasons why parents may not be able to help with homework, including busy schedules, low English proficiency, low literacy, fraught child-parent relationships or unfamiliarity with new curriculum. Exposure and access to a tutor that fits their learning style was described by tweens as beneficial, especially in the case they do not understand explanations from parents or teachers. Participants also noted that they might want to connect with peers from other schools who are studying the same concepts. In this case, peers could act as volunteer tutors.

Leaders from drop-in after-school programs expressed that their programs do not have a focus on homework or homework help, with one exception. Asad, who works for a cultural community organization that runs a well-attended homework help program, conveyed a desire for the library to support his program by developing appropriate resources for his tutors to use. Of all the EPL tween services that were presented to adult interviewees, the researcher received most interest in Solaro, EPL’s online, Alberta-curriculum-tied study tool, and had three parents ask for a follow-up email with a link to the resource.

Specific Library Feedback

It was quite common in the interviews or focus groups for participants to frame their responses as practical improvements to known library services. This section details research data that was less theoretical in approach, and is more specifically related to the evaluation or improvement of current library services at EPL.

Spaces

As most focus groups commenced with the tween participants drawing their ideal libraries, initial remarks related to how spaces impact activities within the library. Four major themes resulted from these conversations, including coziness, capacity, noise levels and dedicated spaces for tweens.

A desire for cozy spaces with comfortable furniture was raised by tweens in nearly all focus groups. Participants mentioned their interest to relax into the furniture, quite often with a book in hand, and stay longer in the space as a result of their comfort. Specifically, tween participants mentioned bean bags, armchairs, couches and even massage chairs; Charlotte, age 10, illustrated the desirable attributes as “poofy and fluffy.” This exchange at one focus group further illustrates participants’ interests in using comfortable furniture to relax and focus:

Alonso, age 13 - “I think comfy seating helps you relax more; it makes more of an open environment.”

Cory, age 12 - “You’d want to stay in the library for quite some time if there’s comfy furniture.”

Toni, age 13 - “You wouldn’t want to sit and be uncomfortable, because it’s hard to focus.”

Frustration was expressed by tween participants who had difficulty finding available after-school seating they desired, or sometimes any seating at all. Leroy stated, “Some of the time the grade eights go and they get there before us...we just get there later and it’s full. Then we have to sit on the wooden or plastic chairs, where it’s not as nice to stay at.” This lack of available seating irritated the participants, who also preferred larger, open layouts. New library designs, such as at Mill Woods and Jasper Place, were praised for improvements in seating capacity, comfort and openness of space, particularly as compared to older or past branches.

Though tweens in one focus group mentioned one silent library branch that was too quiet for their liking, participants more commonly described noisy library conditions that irritated them. These noises were generally concentrated in one of two areas: computer banks or kids’ areas. In the computer banks, participants described noisy outbursts from customers playing games, or general noise levels that were disturbing to them. Older tweens were particularly upset by noise made by young children, including Elizabeth, age 13, who said, “When there are little kids there, they start screaming and are loud and disruptive.” Multiple solutions were provided by participants, ranging from partitioning the library by noise levels to strategic positioning of kids’ areas to adding more silent rooms. When younger tweens expressed a desire for silent rooms, they imagined its use as a reading space, whereas older tweens more frequently emphasized its use as a study space.

It is partly as a result of noise levels from younger kids that many tween participants called for a dedicated library space for them and their peers. This need for space was further illustrated by Vanessa, age 13, “Most teens get annoyed with little kids,

and there's like adults always bugging us." Through shared age and context, they felt that it would be easier to relax and be themselves in these areas. While older tweens were more likely to request a separate lounge space, younger tweens emphasized their issues in finding computers that fit their need. In their case, the "kids" computers were too juvenile, yet some felt discomfort sitting at the adult computer banks. One participant suggested splitting computers into three sections: kids, teens and adults. However, the need for dedicated space often arose from the fact that libraries lack this type of area for tweens. As Kaytlin, age 12, said, "That's where I have a concern – there is no hangout area [in the library]." Phoenix, age 13, added, *"I don't go to the little kids' section because that's not where I fit in.* If there was a separate area, with bean bags...[that, I'd] enjoy."

Providing an option just for tweens, away from other ages, was similarly discussed in the dotmocracy options for lounge programs or learning labs. Lounge programs currently exist at EPL, and are distinguished through designation of the program room for a specific age group (generally tweens or teens) to hang out and take part in multiple, unstructured activities made available to them by a staff member. Relatedly, learning labs would use a designated area of the library for after-school use by tweens, and would feature unstructured access to maker technologies. Tween participants praised how these programs encouraged personal choice by providing access to a variety of activities, and some looked forward to meeting new friends or had interest in the social aspect of these programs. Many specified that video games should be available as part of any lounge. Emmy, age 13, described her positive response to the learning lab option, *"I think a lot of younger kids go [to the library], but you should make it a cooler place for older kids...if it became more modern, technology-based and more of a hangout area."* Lounge or learning lab spaces also appealed to participants through access to high and low-tech resources that aren't available at home, and the low-risk opportunity to be creative without the fear of assessment, as at school.

Cataloguing and Wayfinding

The study's youth participants experienced difficulty finding books that suit their interests or reading level.⁹ Frustration was expressed at cataloguing systems that did not make inherent sense to them, which contributed to the length of time it took for them to find books that fit their needs. Gayatri, age 12, believed "Many people would visit libraries more often if they knew where everything was [and] had a tool that could help them discover or start reading new authors." Three common suggestions included separating books by age or reading level, by genre, and by

⁹ Response was limited to books and did not extend to finding other collection items.

series. Cataloguing books by age or reading level was more commonly suggested by younger tween participants. Others desired genrefied materials, such as Killian, age 13, who remarked:

They should label them above; for like some [genres] they should have a certain section, like one just for graphic novels. Not just within the fiction or non-fiction sections. It gets annoying. I want it very separate.

Of the participants that wanted series kept together, some believed books should be catalogued alphabetically by title instead of by author. These participants noted that authors were less memorable than the series.

Signage wasn't always sufficient, to which Hailey, age 9, stated, "For the libraries, I wish there were more sections telling me where the books are." Some participants wondered if section or aisle numbers would help to specify exactly where in the library books existed, while others imagined more innovative solutions. One popular idea was an interactive "bookfinder" with a touch-screen, voice recognition-enabled interface that visually represents the location of the book in query. Similarly, one of the letters presented two options to alleviate this issue: one, a video walkthrough of each library, with attention to each section and two, creation of a labelled map for customers to access. Both options would be accessible on the library's public website.

Participants were also interested in the use of tools to help discover books. Bev, age 14, described her process of finding books:

Sometimes...you have no idea what book you want. So then you browse around randomly, and you're picking up random books...So [it would help] if you were to click on a book you liked, and then it would say 'recommended if you liked this book.'

In addition, participants desired physical displays in library branches. Displays featuring new books, books of the day/week, top picks by genre and read-a-likes for popular titles were all options that participants discussed to improve the process of discovering titles that fit each reader's interests and increased their awareness of different authors or series.

Collections

Conversation in the tween focus groups often centred on participants' favourite parts of the library collection, as well as improvements they would like to see to library collections. The two major themes of this conversation included material

formats and genres, as well as more general collections management and circulation suggestions.

Formats and Genres

Books were absolutely central to tween participants' conception of a library, as illustrated by Cherie, *"Of course it's not a library without all the books...I'd want every type of book that is humanly possible!"* A diversity of reading options was desired, such as with younger tweens in one focus group who wished to read age-appropriate books with larger print or simpler words. Instead of single-item loaning for digital collections, two letters from grade seven students suggested preloading tablets and ebooks with popular titles by age and genre, and then loaning out those devices to customers.

Audiobooks were also brought up in multiple focus groups as a good alternative to reading, particularly for those who were tired or lacked interest in reading, which they believed requires more energy than listening to an audiobook. Two students shared that their teachers used audiobooks to accommodate learner's strengths, including Vanessa, who stated, "I'm not a fast reader, so my teacher thinks it would be a better idea if I [listen to] it on audiobooks." There were multiple calls by participants for increases to the audiobook collection. The appeal of comic books, manga and graphic novels was also evident in many focus groups, as described by Kawaii, age 12: "I like books with pictures, because I get bored if they don't have any pictures." Many participants viewed these collections as insufficient and called for increases to the size of the comic, graphic novel and, most commonly, manga collections.

Video games were a common point of discussion, especially in focus groups of younger tweens. Favourite video games were described with fervor, and some expressed dissatisfaction that they could not sign out computer games from EPL. A few participants conveyed disappointment with experiences of checking out video games that ended up being unsatisfactory; this also extended to DVDs. It was suggested to add a video game and DVD testing station at the library, at which customers could, for a limited time, test the item before signing out. Ralph, age 12, described how "This one time I got this game that looked really interesting, and then I went home to play it and it was really bad. It's annoying because you might not get back for a week or so." In the analog sphere, board games were commonly discussed as something the library should make available for play in a separate room, with friends. Adult participants praised board games for their development of socio-emotional skills as well as their implicit literacy-building.

Some focus groups assessed a recent innovation from Harford County Public Library – LEAP kits – as a dotmocracy option. These kits package themed science equipment and resources with activity suggestions and instructions, and are made available to customers as a packaged, circulating collection item (Thompson, 2015). Toni praised LEAP kits for their ability to fit different learning styles: “Some people learn in different ways, so it has all those learning abilities in it. You could use your hands.” These kits were appealing both to those who wanted to improve their understanding of topics from school, and those who wanted to further skills that aren’t covered in curriculum. Peter, age 12, was particularly enthusiastic about this option, as he said “Take my stickers; that’s the best idea ever!”

General Collections Management and Circulation

Regardless of format, tweens were most concerned with new items and the availability of desired items. Particularly for movies and books, tweens communicated their interest in seeing new releases promoted and available at their libraries. Some participants even perceived the public library as stocking outdated collection items. Low availability of newer or popular releases left tween customers frustrated, like Jacob, age 11, who wanted “More books. Maybe not more, but more of a certain kind of books.” Younger tweens grew impatient with long hold lineups, and older tween participants were frustrated that they couldn’t find newer books at the library. Nafisa, age 12, remarked “Every time you need a book, especially famous ones, you need to place a hold and the wait can be interminable. This might discourage tweens and they might not want to come to the library as often.” Eight discrete tweens suggested that more copies be purchased if hold lists become too long.

In contrast to more traditional library services, eight tweens expressed an interest in libraries having a shop section at which one could purchase books. Some envisioned this as a used book store, whereas others wanted new materials or box sets of series. Charmaine, age 14, was one of the participants who preferred having her own books and shared, “I also like to read with a physical copy and it’s kind of cool to have your own book, so you can make notes or mark your favourite parts.”

Participants enthusiastically welcomed the dotmocracy option for EPL materials to be delivered as holds and returned to school libraries. One parent, without prompting from the researcher, suggested this option to help families to reduce late fee accrual, maintain active library accounts, and thus reduce barriers to accessing library services. All groups praised this option for its sheer convenience, as they are at school far more often than they are able to visit the library. Taylor, age 12, liked this idea so the library could reach more people: “Some people [at our school] can’t

get to the library because they don't have time or their parents can't drive...[this] would be more convenient." Others liked how this would make their school libraries a more attractive place to visit by including larger, more modern collections or, as Ella put it, "It would help make our [school] library more of a library. We have like no books in it."

Computers and Technological Resources

It was common for tween participants to enjoy spending time on computers at the library as a way to be social, relax or complete work. However, feedback in two focus groups mentioned that they found the computers to be outdated, as described here by Grayson, age 14: "For example, they still have the tower and everything with the computer. That's way out of date to me; just seeing it puts me off and reminds me of school." As with holds, tweens expressed their impatience in waiting for computers, and wanted EPL to add computers and decrease wait times in the after-school hours. Multiple tweens called for a "no reservations" policy with computers, as mentioned here by Tim, age 9, "I'm thinking no reservations on the computer...I've seen where it says '30 minutes this computer is reserved for this certain person.' That way it kicks you off the computer." As conveyed in this quotation, tweens were also frustrated by being bumped from computers, particularly if they had just signed on. Participants suggested having Chromebooks or tablets available for in-branch circulation to both alleviate demand for computers and permit customers to bring the tech to other areas of the library. The benefits of having this portable technology was articulated by Leela, age 12,

Instead of going on the computers and sitting on chairs where you feel uncomfortable, just take the Chromebooks and sit comfortably on the comfy chairs.

By providing tablets already preloaded with educational games and bookmarks to learning websites, tween participants suggested that the library could streamline the process for customers. Computer and video games were very popular, and Minecraft, Geometry Dash, Pokemon, League of Legends, Agar.io, Pixel Gun, Halo, Call of Duty, FIFA and NHL were all specifically named within the focus groups. Despite widespread popularity with tween participants, a few advocated for limited computer time for customers interested in gaming. One parent called for the removal of games from library computers due to the focus it takes away from reading and other creative activities.

Programming

Feedback on programming ranged from general, program-inclusive feedback to more specific feedback relating to programs that EPL does well or should do more

often. Specifically for after-school programming, some program leaders suggested that a consistent presence is more important than constant innovation for youth with no extracurricular activities. However, for tweens who were more scheduled, parents considered that library programs would have to exhibit greater worth for their children to commit free time to a scheduled activity. As Asad analogized, “If a restaurant has bad food, even if their prices are good, people won’t go.”

Attracting tween participants isn’t always easy, and participants suggested ways to entice customers to take part in programs. Incentives to participation were discussed by both adults and tweens, with food and prizes as the most common suggestions. Limiting participation to a certain age range was also recommended by participants of one focus group, while others didn’t really see many opportunities at the library for people their age. Elizabeth lamented on this perceived dearth of programs, *“The programs they have...there’s nothing really fun about them, or they’re for little kids. I don’t really want to do a puppet show, but I don’t need study hall.”*

It was quite common for focus groups participants to discuss their interest in using the library to learn about new things. They expressed an affinity to “getting educated” that was sometimes related to curiosity on a topic from school, or completely unrelated to school. Younger tweens, specifically, reflected on fun educational games that they had played, and even singled out spelling as a fun activity. This drive for competitive games was, as with video games, expressed more commonly by young male participants. Luol, age 10, had the idea for a spelling game that is “Like dancing and it tells you what to spell, and there are bunches of letters on the floor that you have to step on and light up, to help you spell.” There was a recognition that the library should avoid too strong of an association with school, however. Jonathan explained how he differentiates his program from school:

There’s no end product in mind; it’s creative and open ended. School is...looking for convergent ideas rather than divergent ideas, so while [they] get more ownership because it is partly their own ideas [sic], we aren’t looking for something specific. [The youth are] running with it.”

Gaming programs received a lot of interest from participants, and both the Makerspace’s gaming nights and branch gaming tournaments were singled out as fun and attractive programs. For younger tweens, large-scale “event” programs with a celebratory nature had large appeal. These events might be themed for holidays or cultural phenomena, and include smaller programs such as a scavenger hunt.

Similarly, one after-school program leader considered leveraging event sentiment by, for example, offering free pizza to increase interest and anticipation.

Cultural Clubs

Cultural clubs, in which groups meet to discuss a television series or book, were brought up without prompt in two focus groups, and were then added as a dotmocracy option for ensuing research. In the television club idea shared by participants, a group would watch a show once a week, sequentially, over a period of time. This, tweens said, would provide a natural extension for the analysis that already occurs in conversations at school, but would permit a social viewing experience that ensures friends are all caught up together. Moreover, participants discussed how they might be able to meet other members of a fandom in a comfortable environment away from the disruptions of home. Tweens also mentioned that attendees could then get involved in selecting subsequent series, selecting discussion questions and even adding educational components.

Comparatively, book clubs were discussed by adult participants as well as tweens. Parents liked the idea that a library book club would provide options that differed from a school environment which, participants stated, might be too structured, under tight time constraints, or include books outside their interest. Tweens suggested that this might aid in developing reading comprehension, and could permit fun activities such as imagining what might come next for the characters, developing writing or drawing skills, and engaging with authors virtually or in-person. One parent suggested that a manga, comic or graphic novel club might be more suitable to subvert the usual novel-study, book club format.

However, not all feedback regarding cultural clubs was positive. Negative feedback for the book clubs included: too close of an association with school (Skylar, age 14, said “It’s like something we already do in Language Arts”), books take too long to complete in comparison to a television show, and there is more time “wasted” in completing a book that you don’t like. For the television club idea, tweens suggested that it was outside the library’s educational scope and there was an alternative in society at the cinema. Some didn’t have as much interest in meeting people in this environment, and instead preferred the convenience of watching and reading at home, and the simplicity of discussing with friends.

Similarly, multiple participants suggested hosting movie nights or afternoons at the library, which were hailed as a free, social and accessible alternative for those who enjoy seeing films. These programs might even choose to feature movies that were based off books, and attendees could then discuss a comparison between the two

formats after the film. Moreover, horror movies were singled out as a genre suitable for those older in the age group. Discussion-based cultural clubs were commonly suggested by older tweens, whereas younger tweens more frequently brought up more passive, movie night options.

Sequential Programming

Interest in sequential programming, with recurring weekly or daily programs that build skills in a specific area, was brought up by participants in adult interviews and also assessed in dotmocracy exercises for “Makerspace with Modules.” Adult participants suggested bringing in local fashion designers, cartoonists and musicians to run these programs. Moreover, they viewed the potential for collaborative learning in sequential programs as meaningful opportunities for social development. One parent hailed the philosophy of a local summer camp that involves participants in selecting and directing their work towards a common goal, and suggested the model for library programs.

Tween participants were interested in having the Makerspace run program modules, which would permit them to demonstrate learning in non-school environments. Peter described the value in these types of programs: *“It gives people like us who are in an elementary-junior high school more options and diversity.* It permits us to go and do even more things than we could previously.” 3D Printers garnered the most enthusiasm from tween participants, though others mentioned the appeal of having access to a variety of technologies through which they could learn and make something new. Key to this was the provision of technology that was unattainable at home, particularly from a financial perspective, to learn new skills that might be transferrable to either school or their future careers.

Staffing

Tween participants didn’t focus on staff too often in the focus groups, but those that did generally praised the helpfulness, resourcefulness and knowledge of EPL staff. Similarly, adult participants mentioned the value in having consistent staffing to improve trust in considering the library as an after-school option. Regarding safety, Annalisa stated “I feel safer sending them if I have some context on that person, and knowing that my child knows who to go to and who’s going to greet them.

Consistency in staffing is critical.” This personal connection between staff, tween and parents can be vital to get tweens in the door the first time, as Sofia elaborated:

Even if I were to tell them this is the most exciting program and the library is just down the street, they won't go...If I were to go with them, then after that initial time when [I] introduced them to some people, it might work. *They go on the basis of a relationship rather than a poster.*

Through this personal relationship, tweens are exposed to positive role models that increase their community support network, which is especially vital for those who may not have as much support at home. One participant also noted that staff can develop relationships with tweens through shared cultural interests, such as print, audio or visual collection items. This can help make the staff more relatable and thus reduce barriers to discussion. Relatedly, Magan indicated that hiring diverse staff is a way to become relatable to tween customers: “Most immigrants love ‘seeing themselves’...[they] feel immediately comfortable [when they do.]”

Timing

Although this project focuses on services in the after-school hours, participants were asked when they preferred to go to the library. A diversity of opinions came in response; Thursday was the most regularly specified weekday, and weekdays were more commonly preferred if the library was located next to a transit centre or near that student's school. Wendy preferred after-school programming for her son, and said “After-school is great – that 3:30-5:30 – parents need the help there, and to get them out of the house.” Other participants preferred opportunities later in the evening to permit time to decompress from the busy school-day, and one after-school leader suggested scheduling programs on weekday evenings if the library is not on the direct commute home, as parents are then likely to be involved in providing transportation.

For families with a busy extracurricular schedule, weekends were the time at which they were available to visit the library. Annalisa suggested rotating special-interest programs every few months from weekdays to weekends to provide opportunities to families who are unable to go on that certain day of the week. Moreover, for younger tweens enrolled in out-of-school care, weekends and weekday evenings were preferable.

Discussion

Age Group Terminology

Although this study uses the term “tween” to refer to its target age group, discussions with the youth themselves indicate that “tween” is rarely used as a self-referential term. In fact, audio transcripts reveal that the only time “tween” was used in the youth focus groups was when it referred to an EPL program or option

provided by the researcher, such as Tween Lounge or Tween Gaming. Comments and letters from junior high students more commonly used “teen” to describe themselves; this was even true for 12 year-old participants. In fact, both the size of the age group under study (six years) and the developmental changes occurring in those years indicate that tweens are not always a discrete unit to be considered holistically for service improvements. Some research data was applicable to the entire group under study – e.g. food – but solutions proposed by older tweens often differed from those recommended by younger tweens.

Currently, EPL uses tween terminology in a couple of places. First, EPL’s event management system, Evanced, includes “Tween” as an age group access point in addition to “Child (9-12 years)” and “Teen”. As common definitions presume that teen’s lower boundary is 13 years (teenager, n.d.; teenage, n.d.), these definitions implicate an overlap between “Tween” and both “Child (9-12 years)” and “Teen.” However, Evanced has program entries use only “Tween”, use “Tween” and “Child 9-12 years”, and use “Tween” and “Teen”. Second, EPL uses the term “Tween” in the title for one active program, Tween Lounge, which currently runs weekly out of five branches and monthly out of one branch.

Positive EPL Practices

As many participants were not aware of the extent of EPL’s services, suggestions sometimes reflected current practices at the library. EPL services or programs that mirrored suggestions by participants included:

- Lounge programs
- Video gaming tournaments
- Reading Buddies (teen volunteer-child literacy program)
- Online materials reviewing
- Solaro (curriculum-base study guides)
- Makerspaces in more branches
- Ereader loaning
- Online read-a-like suggestions
- In-library Chromebook lending
- Smart Space (homework space)

Some participants were surprised when the researcher pointed out similar services already offered by EPL, but others were frustrated at their unawareness. To this Azalea, age 14, saw awareness as the most difficult aspect of service provision, “I don’t think it’s very hard for you guys to make the ideas, it’s just getting us to know about it.”

Service Awareness

It is perhaps unsurprising that awareness of library services presents a barrier to access; in fact, service awareness was one of the top five barriers identified in Maguire & Winton's 2014 EPL report. EPL has an award-winning marketing department that has done a commendable job at raising the library's profile within the city. Yet in an organization with myriad services that has something to benefit each citizen, improving service awareness is always a work in progress and difficulties exist in connecting specific services to the populations that need them. For tweens, this becomes further complicated as they express personal interests that were less pronounced in their younger childhood years. As a result, tween services are more specific to their interests, unlike for early literacy programming, and thus a different approach is required.

These gaps in service awareness were exhibited at every level of participant, from tweens to parents and even after-school leaders. Each of the after-school leaders were unaware of certain tween services despite the fact that they had existing relationships with an EPL branch. It became clear through these conversations that, just as with front-line library staff, program leaders act as community connectors for local services. In some cases, new programs or services should be promoted by narrowcasting communications via influential people, such as these program leaders, and improving word-of-mouth dissemination. There are examples of this happening, such as the circulation of program calendars via after-school programs or schools, but more work in this area should fulfill customer needs and expand services for new customers.

Moreover, concerted efforts may be required to dispel stereotypes that EPL services focus on early literacy. Both parents and tweens commented that they viewed the library as being a place "for little kids," and remarked on early literacy programs, yet had little knowledge of tween programming. In addition, parents shared that they hadn't considered bringing their tweens to the library, despite going quite frequently when they were younger. Gertrude pondered the potential to change these mental models:

If there was a way to remind parents to take your kids to the library – it's not just for sing sign or storytime. Sometimes it's good to just drop-by on your way home from soccer, or whatever. You forget, otherwise – you don't think of it anymore.

By stemming losses to childhood library visits, EPL has an opportunity to build stronger connections with tweens that can persist through young adulthood.

Access

Throughout the research process, it became evident that there is a significant number of tweens who will not come to libraries in the after-school hours. Three main barriers stopped tweens from coming to the library: enrolment in care, engagement in extracurricular activities, and transportation. In Canada, 42.7% of nine year-olds access child care (Sinha, 2011). Meanwhile, enrolment in a multitude of after-school, extracurricular activities was common for many tweens, and they had very structured lives that made them more likely to visit the library on weekends or during the evening, after their extracurriculars were complete. Finally, junior high school participants commonly mentioned the inconvenience of going “out of their way” to visit a library as compared to going home. Although it is unlikely that EPL can reach tweens who are busy with extracurricular activities, efforts can be made to reduce barriers for the other two groups.

This first group, tweens enrolled in child care, are generally clustered in larger groups at out-of-school care organizations. Two after-school program leaders expressed a desire for additional year-round programming, and noted the gap between the relative frequency of summer library outreach visits and the dearth of academic-year programming. While recognizing that EPL does not have the staff capacity for extensive after-school care outreach programming, Jennifer suggested that EPL undertake the facilitation of a city-wide after-school program:

If it was something that was accessible through the app or website, it could have the project and list of materials; maybe you could have more difficult materials for those who show up in the branch. It would be cool for those to be available for those who can't make it in to EPL. A program plan that could be adapted for out-of-school cares.

In this program, Jennifer suggested running a coinciding in-branch program and providing lower cost options for organizations with lower budgets. Individual branches could then extend staggered attendance invites to after-school recreation programs or out-of-school care to in-branch programs to connect them to physical library spaces and collections. Similarly, though in-library homework help was only desired by 52% of polled tweens¹⁰, collaboration with existing tutoring programs was suggested by one program leader. In this realm, engagement with tutoring programs to discover resource needs or consider program facilitation might be something for EPL to consider.

¹⁰ From dotmocracy vote tally.

The second group includes tweens who are unable or uninterested in finding transport to the library. As discussed in the Literature Review, junior high schoolers are the most likely age group to go straight home after-school (Clifton, 2003; McDonald, 2005, Paleti, Copperman & Bhat, 2010). Lack of transport is the issue for some tweens in venturing further afield, while others might have limits placed on their freedoms that prevent more adventurous public outings. Suggestions for transport were offered by adult participants, including emphasizing collaborative ride sharing from schools and provision of transit passes. The latter issue, on limited freedoms, might be ameliorated by marketing the library to parents as a safe space for tweens to experiment with these new freedoms.

Collections

Collections feedback was generally applicable to circulation or cataloguing, but there was one exception. Tweens consistently suggested that manga, comic books and graphic novels sections of EPL libraries were not large or diverse enough. Given that many of these items can be read in a single sitting, it is possible that circulation stats alone do not tell the whole picture of usage rates for these collections and thus larger, more diverse collections may be purchased.

Circulation

Tweens were especially frustrated by long wait times, and unlike adults, many do not have the freedom or purchasing power to buy a copy that holds their interest. Moreover, there are many tweens that cannot plan out library visits and are instead beholden to their parents' availability or interest in taking them to a branch. As a result, they are less likely to use the hold system and more inclined to browse collections in search of an item that fits their needs. For browsing youth, visiting a library branch that doesn't have a popular book can negatively impact their perception of the library as a place lacking in relevancy.

Although holds have improved convenience for countless library customers, it is possible that this system privileges more advanced library users. Improving access to library customers should extend to circulation, for those who don't have the skills, time or knowledge to place holds on copies. As tweens are at an age in which they select their own items, but lack the understanding of library operations that older customers have, they are perhaps the group that is most affected by this gap in knowledge. EPL should consider solutions to improving collections access for tweens, including offering holds-free copies of popular items.

Cataloguing & Wayfinding

The difficulties tweens have finding items at EPL came up in many focus groups, and may be related to the reduced library instruction they receive at school.

Currently, few local schools employ teacher librarians and some school libraries have decreased or removed physical collections. In these environments, it is likely that fewer tweens have received instruction on classification systems or even the opportunity to acclimate to physical item classification in their school libraries. Additionally, public libraries are much larger public spaces that pose inherent wayfinding complications, let alone for those who need to find a known item or effectively browse.

More than ever, modern libraries need to consider organizing collections in intuitive ways that meet their customers' needs. Many tweens wanted help in finding popular books, or books that appealed to their interests – either a specific genre or a similar book – and our libraries do not currently split our collections into smaller, more manageable “chunks” for younger readers. EPL branches use youth displays sparingly, and youth collections are not genrefied. Efforts need to be made to simplify item discovery for tweens at EPL.

Food

As one of the most ubiquitous themes in this research project, the desire for food to be available at the library is of high concern for this demographic. This echoes research from *Tween Services at EPL*, which found that extended needs were exhibited by lone tweens who spent long hours after-school at EPL (Marshall, 2016). Although the addition of coffee shops to our freestanding locations is unfeasible given competing demands in a fixed space, there are alternative options that can be considered, such as adding vending machines in lobby areas.

There have also been libraries in the United States that have partnered with local food banks to provide snacks to youth, such as at Cleveland Public Library and St. Louis County Library. Cleveland's partnership focuses on providing after-school meals to youth at 16 of their 30 branches. According to their Literacy & Education Coordinator, Sherri D. Jones, more youth are drawn to the libraries where they look forward to enjoying a meal with friends, and some branches serve 40+ meals per day (personal communication, March 09, 2016).

Spaces

As indicated in the research findings, older tweens expressed needs for intentional, age-specific library spaces. Criticism from younger tweens was limited to the computer sections. These younger tweens appeared to have no issue with hanging out in the children's section of the library, unlike their older counterparts. For older tweens, group spaces were desired for two types of activities: schoolwork and casual, social engagements.

Once students arrive in junior high school, they are typically met with a new form of homework: group projects. In post-secondary learning environments, academic libraries' lengthy opening hours and bookable group study spaces fit the needs of these assignments; school libraries, however, have limited hours that do not extend into the evenings or weekends. Calls from older tween participants envisioned group project spaces with large tables and a number of physical supplies and digital resources available. Key to this was the provision of multiple portable laptops, Chromebooks or tablets to leverage group productivity and avoid all group members clustering around one screen. Although EPL's current homework space program, Smart Space, has not attracted participants in large numbers, promotional efforts have targeted high school students, rather than those in junior high, and do not specifically mention group work.

Comfortable and moveable furniture, separation from kids' sections (and its accompanying noise)¹¹, and access to age-specific materials are all key to a positive social space for older tweens.¹² Use of the terminology "lounge" was sometimes used by participants who were familiar with EPL's lounge programs, but more commonly described by those who viewed a lounge as a permanent space, rather than a specific program. Thus, the space should be available at all times and flexibly accommodate on-the-floor programming during the after-school hours.

Needs desired from social spaces were not necessarily distinct from homework spaces, and the learning lab dotmocracy option was embraced enthusiastically by most groups. At learning labs, libraries provide a public space that give youth opportunities for developing cultural competencies and social skills through the access to technology, which helps to reduce participation gaps from underserved populations and improve their preparedness for 21st century employment (Jenkins, 2009). These spaces were pioneered at Chicago Public Library in 2009, and its 11 *YOUmedia* locations have laptops, cameras, music and gaming equipment, and are targeted for either high school or grades 6-8 students, with a local mentor present at each branch (including librarians, associates, or media mentors). There are a variety of programs run through *YOUmedia* centres, including book clubs, low-tech maker crafts and recycled crafts.

Designated teen spaces can flexibly facilitate both homework and informal learning opportunities. The opportunity to experiment with technologies in an assessment-free environment appealed to many participants, who were enthusiastic for expanding the opportunities available to them at home or school. That said, some

¹¹ Noise was never attributed to peers, but was instead prescribed to "older teens" or "younger kids".

¹² As aforementioned, older tweens always described these spaces as "teen spaces"

noted that the foremost need is for a permanent, age-specific space. Here Erinle, age 13, describes her vision for the area:

Maybe just add a couple books, a couple computers...like a space for teens. It doesn't need to be elaborate or modern, it just has to be a place where I can be peaceful and do my work or read my book without an adult taking my computer or a kid yelling.

Improvements to the comfort and age-specificity of these spaces at EPL will make our branches more welcoming environments for youth to spend lengthier periods of time and visit the library more frequently.

Programs

Through the course of this internship, the researcher often heard “We need the school-aged equivalent to Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn.” As EPL’s best-attended foundational program, Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn uses repetition, visuals and movement to improve development and communication for children aged 0-3. However, the broad-based appeal of an early literacy program is not exactly replicable for tweens. At these ages, diversity of interests abound, and highly structured program plans have less allure for older youth customers. The challenges in tween program planning was expressed by Kylo, age 14, who said, “It would be challenging, because certain people don’t like the things that other people like. So it might not grab their attention. So it will bring a few people in, but probably not a lot – because you don’t know their interests.”

Through observations of the focus group participants or children of parent interviewees, the researcher constructed the view of two groups of potential EPL program attendees. This was gleaned from participants’ individual statements, as well as the summative effect of their discussion throughout each session. Members of the first group have highly structured schedules with multitudinous extracurricular obligations and minimal free time; this group views their limited free weekday time as precious, and are less likely to attend after-school programming, especially less structured lounge-type programming. They are more likely to make special trips to the library for a specific program, and specifically one that fits their interests or develops a skill. The second group has far more free time after-school, and sometimes spends time in the library. This group is more likely to accrue the benefits of after-school programming, such as adult mentorship, sustained contact with positive peers, and frequent, consistent programming than for the first group, which accesses these positive effects through other activities (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Fredricks and Simpkins, 2013; Larson, 2000). For these tweens, staff must

respect their need to feel relief from the structures of a busy schoolday and provide opportunities to complement, and not extend, the formal learning day.

Although EPL has recently run after-school Teen Book Clubs at select branches, low average attendance (3.6 attendees) caused their cancellation. As youth progress into high school, increased homework expectations coincide with reductions in pleasure reading occur (Clark & Douglas, 2011). Instead of targeting teens or high school-aged students, perhaps a different approach might derive better results. EPL currently has book-centred programming for youth older than grade four. In grades 4-6, schools often begin experimenting with in-class literacy clubs or circles, and multiple parents discussed their children's enthusiasm for these conversations about books, at their reading level, with peers. Alternatively, passion expressed by participants regarding graphic novels, comics and manga merits consideration for an interactive, art-based book club format. Finally, the recent introduction of One Book One Edmonton and a One Book, One Break, Many Adventures provide templates for expansion to an Edmonton tween book club, with both online interaction and in-branch events.¹³ Inclusion or adaptation of the Young Readers' Choice Awards may also be considered to provide multiple options and accommodate diverse interests.

Conclusion

Although the research goals for *What Tweens Want* indicate an initial intent in solely studying after-school service needs, feedback from participants rarely focused on critical hours alone. This was particularly common from youth participants, who were less likely to differentiate responses to services required for a specific time of day. Moreover, the serendipitous letters from grade seven students lacked the impact of having the researcher present to clarify the study's aims, and were less likely to specify after-school needs or gaps in service.

Consequently, findings featured a broader discussion of barriers to access and service improvements which, while also pertaining to after-school library services, mostly affect all hours. The resulting recommendations relate to five broader service areas: increasing awareness, investigating food provision, altering spaces, improving collections and technology, and updating programming.

¹³ One Book, One Break, Many Adventures featured a city-wide graphic novel during spring break.

Recommendations

Recommendations in each section are listed by descending order of priority.

Awareness

1. Develop a communication strategy for parents of tweens that centres on schools and youth agencies as vital communication channels.
2. Add recruitment plan to the Pilot Program Checklist. Expect that, upon launch of new tween branch programs, all catchment youth organizations are contacted.
3. Remove “tween” as an Evanced age option.
4. Build positive and lasting personal relationships with tweens, as suggested in *Tween Services at EPL*, through class visits that recognize the diversity of their interests and reengage them with library services.
5. Promote *Personal Picks* to tweens.
6. Consider renaming “Tween Lounge.” Avoid using the term “tween” in any marketing materials.
7. Create school presentation best practices, including collaborating with educators to select a few services to focus on for each presentation.

Spaces

1. Integrate principles from the 21st Century Library Spaces Internship Recommendations Report to ensure branch spaces are welcoming to older tween/teen customers and feature comfortable, moveable furniture.
2. Continue work on the 2014-2016 EPL Business Plan action to “meet needs for quiet and collaborative spaces.”
3. Determine user needs and feasibility of leveraging customer demographic information to launch relevant EPL digital content once customer logs-on to a library computer.

Collections and Technology

1. Pilot a non-holdable *Hits to Go* collection for tweens with a three week loan period and identical fee structure to other juvenile materials.
2. Investigate the possibility of partnering with local schools to improve class and student access to EPL collections.
3. Increase physical displays of youth materials, particularly for read-a-likes and different genres.
4. Explore ways to improve access to Juvenile collections (e.g. grouping materials by reading level or genre.)
5. Encourage staff to improve tween customer experiences by proposing read-a-likes and offering instruction on hold placement.

6. Investigate models on developing LEAP kits for public circulation.¹⁴
7. Augment video game collections with online computer games that comply with digital rights management requirements, as they become available (e.g. OnePlay).

Programs

1. Partner with local agencies to offer sequential, moduled programming that focuses on skill development (e.g. coding, fashion design, cartooning).
2. Build relationships and foster loyalty by scheduling, when possible, the same staff member(s) to run after-school programs.
3. Devise additional opportunities for youth to be involved in program development and volunteering.
4. Focus tween programming on activities that foster art, music and technology creation.
5. Develop comic book, manga, or graphic novel clubs for younger tweens.
6. Create an older tween/teen TV or movie club pilot program.¹⁵
7. Ensure every branch has a selection of board games that tweens can use to play after-school.
8. Hold event programs for younger tweens and families. Options include fandom and holiday celebrations.
9. Supplement Minecraft computer game programs with OnePlay programming.

¹⁴ See page 29 for a description of LEAP kits.

¹⁵ Care must be taken to select shows that are both age-appropriate and appealing. Shows suggested by participants (e.g. Walking Dead) may not be acceptable to show publicly to youth.

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Appendix A – Sample Information Letter

Study title: What tweens want: Improving Edmonton Public Library’s after-school services for tweens.

Researcher:

Kyle Marshall, School-Aged Services Intern Librarian
Edmonton Public Library
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Edmonton, AB T5J 2V4
kmarshall@epl.ca; (780) 496-6822

Background

This letter is an invitation to participate in a research project. The study will help Edmonton Public Library understand what 9-14 year-old youth need after-school. The results will guide the library to improve its programming and services for this age group.

Purpose

I want to study what 9-14 year-olds need from spaces and services in the after-school hours. I also want to know their opinions of how the library can improve. The results from my study will help make the library a more welcoming and fun place for youth this age.

Study Procedures

If you bring back a signed Consent Form to your school, the program participant will be asked to join a focus group. This is a discussion I will lead with a small group of kids from the school. The participants will be asked to share their thoughts as we talk. The conversation will be about their opinions and experiences. I will audio record the discussion.

Benefits and Risks

If you consent to participation, you will be helping the library to improve its after-school customer experience for tweens. The library will be a better place to hang out, do homework and use new technologies. We expect no risks for those who take part in this study.

Appendix B – Assent Form

Study Title: What tweens want: Improving Edmonton Public Library’s after-school services for tweens.

I agree that:

- All my questions were answered.
- I understand why Kyle is doing this research.
- Only Kyle will listen to the recording.
- Nothing from the focus group can identify me.
- I can leave the focus group or refuse to answer a question.

I will participate in a focus group for this study.

Participant’s Name:

Participant’s Signature:

Date:

Researcher’s Signature:

Appendix C – Sample Consent Form

Study Title: What tweens want: Improving Edmonton Public Library’s after-school services for tweens.

As a condition of my dependent’s participation in this study, I confirm the following:

- I have read the Information Letter provided by the researcher.
- All my questions on the study have been answered.
- I understand the general purpose of the research.
- I understand that the only the researcher will see the focus group responses.
- I understand that no data taken from the focus group can identify the participant.
- I understand that the participant may leave the focus group at any time or refuse to answer any question.
- I understand that the data from this focus group will only be used to improve Edmonton Public Library’s services.
- I understand that data from this focus group will be stored in a password-protected digital document for five years, after which point it will be destroyed.

I give my permission for _____
(participant’s name) to be included in a focus group for this study.

I would like a copy of this form:

Guardian’s Signature:

Date:

Researcher’s Signature:

Appendix D – Tween Focus Group Sample Guide

Starting activity: Please draw the perfect library for you. Think big – it can be more than books – it can be whatever you want, and should show what you like to do! What can you do there? What does it have for you to borrow? What are the staff like?

Questions

1. Who has been to a library in Edmonton?
 - a. (Optional, for those who go) What makes you want to go to the library?
 - i. What do you do there?
 - b. For those who don't go to the library, why not? For those who don't go to the library after-school, why not?
2. What would you want to be able to do in the library?
 - a. What would make the library a better place to visit after-school?
 - b. What programs would you like to attend at the library?
3. The researcher will discuss EPL's current out-of-school programs. He will then run a dotmocracy facilitated activity, ensuring that participants know that consensus is not important, on the following question:
 - a. Probes: Is the suggested age range a detriment to attending?
Opinions on: Timing of the program? Structure in programming?
Program names or marketing of the programs?

Closing

1. "Suppose that you had one minute to talk to the CEO on improving the library. What would you say?"
2. Pseudonym development – final piece.

Appendix E – Parent Interview Guide

1. Welcome

Review the following:

- Who I am and what I am trying to do
 - Tweens (9-14), and why
 - After-school (3-6) and why
- What will be done with this information
- Why I asked you to participate
- Participation is strictly voluntary
 - Don't want to answer a question, fine!
 - Want to end the interview, just say so
 - If after you want parts not included, you get in touch with me!
 - I will record this, but we can turn the recorders off at some point

2. Explanation of the process

About interviews

- I learn from you – no right or wrong answer!
 - Every person's experiences and opinions are important
 - You will be given a pseudonym so people won't be able to identify you. You can select one if you like!

Logistics

- Interview will last about 30-45 minutes

3. Turn on Tape Recorder

4. Ask the participant if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

Interview

1. How many children do you have? What are their ages and genders?
2. What are your child's needs, after-school?
Probe: Social? Academic? Leisure?
3. What barriers to learning do you think kids face?
4. What after-school activities or programs does your child desire?
Opinions on: Timing of the program? Structure in programming? Program names or marketing of the programs?
5. How can the library support your child's development?
Probes: Homework? Study skills? Research or resource skills?

Preamble: EPL currently does offer some services for tweens in the after-school hours. We run many programs (drop-in or more structured, examples include lounges, Evil Genius Club, Lego, Reading Buddies, etc.), outreach programming that goes into the community, YRCA, Information Ninja program, Solaro, which covers grades 3-12 AB curriculum (online content for Key and SNAP guides), and of course our physical and digital collections that I don't have the time to describe here!

6. What can the library do to better meet your child's needs, after-school?

Closing

Reiterate purpose of the interview.

7. "Suppose that you had one minute to talk to the CEO about improving the library. What would you say?"
8. Please share where you were born, and how long you have lived in Edmonton?
9. Are you a library user, personally?

Pseudonym development – final piece.

Appendix F – After-school Program Leader Questions

1. How long have you worked here?
2. What can you tell me about the demographics of the children that your organization serves?
 - a. Probes: Do they attend schools nearby? Are their English skills strong? Do they attend school regularly?
3. What do you see as the biggest needs do kids in your program have in the after school hours?
4. What barriers to out-of-school learning do your kids face?
5. What after-school programs do kids in your program desire?
Opinions on: Timing of the program? Structure in programming? Program names or marketing of the programs?
6. Do your students lack resources outside of school to continue their learning?
 - a. Probe: Which resources are they lacking?

Preamble: EPL currently does offer some services for tweens in the after-school hours. We run many programs (drop-in or more structured, examples include lounges, Evil Genius Club, Lego, Reading Buddies, etc.), outreach programming that goes into the community, YRCA, Information Ninja program, Solaro, which covers grades 3-12 AB curriculum (online content for Key and SNAP guides), and of course our physical and digital collections that I don't have the time to describe here!

7. How do you think out-of-school learning gaps can be addressed by the library?
8. How do you think the library can help your organization to support tween learning and development?

Closing

9. "Suppose that you had one minute to talk to the CEO about improving the library. What would you say?"
10. Please share where you were born, and how long you have lived in Edmonton?
11. Are you a library user, personally?

Appendix G – EPL Branch Codes

Service Point	Code
Abbottsfield – Penny McKee	ABB
Calder	CAL
Capilano	CPL
Castle Downs	CSD
Clareview	CLV
eplGO West Henday	WHP
Highlands	HIG
Idylwyld	IDY
Jasper Place	JPL
Lois Hole	LHL
Londonderry	LON
Makerspace	MAK
Meadows	MEA
Mill Woods	MLW
Riverbend	RIV
Shelley Milner	MNJ
Sprucewood	SPW
Stanley A. Milner	MNA
Whitemud Crossing	WMC
Woodcroft	WOO