

Community engagement

Youth engagement – VerbYL Youth Lounge/Youth Library

VerbYL is a new concept providing joined-up services to youth aged 12-2. VerbYL provides a physical space, offering a complementary range of services and experiences. It's not a library with a youth worker, nor is it a youth centre with a library in the corner – rather it is a combination of the two.

VerbYL is a funky, comfy, exciting youth-friendly shop-front space where young people can chill out with friends, find out what's going on, borrow DVDs or console games, use the Internet, play loud music or watch pay TV on the plasma screen. They also receive a distinctive membership card allowing them to borrow books, magazines, graphic novels, console games inside and outside of VerbYL, while allowing them also borrower rights at other library branches. Members can also become involved in a wide variety of spontaneous and scheduled activities organised by either the youth worker or the youth librarian. These could include a social game of poker, Twister, a Wii tournament, art activities, larger community themes (eg decorating a VerbYL float for the Pinefest

Parade), karaoke, cooking...the list goes on. If a young person needs help with homework or typing up a resume, the youth librarian can help out. If they're feeling blue, or just want to discuss a personal issue, they can have quiet word with the youth worker.

While the service seems seamless to young people who use it, there is of course a differentiation of roles between library and youth services. The youth librarian has responsibility for resource selection and circulation, information and literacy skills, and library-based programs including Reader's Lounge (book group), study group, Anime and Manga Club and Warhammer Club and the verbYL website. The youth worker

focuses primarily on positive participation in the space, organising events and activities, personal development, confidential information and referral. They also negotiate with other providers offering the space for services such as employment, health advice and counselling.



The VerbYL shopfront



VerbYL - a hive of activity

The success of verbYL lies in the engagement of the young people in the community. Now operating for two years, verbYL has approximately 500 active members. This has been achieved by extensive consultation with the target audience in all aspects of planning, using the Youth Council as a reference group. There has also been a commitment to marketing verbYL with a distinctive logo and colour scheme. Ongoing responsiveness to youth for activities, services and events is achieved both formally (via the Youth Council) and informally, based on the positive relationships formed with young people by both the youth librarian and the youth worker. An example of the complementary nature of the services is the development of the Rainbow Brigayde, a support group

for young gays and lesbians, initiated by a young person and supported by the youth worker. In consultation with this group, the youth librarian has developed a collection of gay and lesbian information books and teen novels.

VerbYL was recognised as the 2006 Winner in the Youth Engagement Category of the National Local Government Awards presented by DOTARS (Department of Transport and Regional Services).

For further information see the September 2007 issue of APLIS or visit <http://www.verbYL.net.au>

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Library and Information Week 19–25 May 2008

The 2008 theme for Library and Information Week (LIW) is

'Libraries are for everyone'

Libraries are a vital part of our commitment to promoting the free flow of information and helping our clients achieve their goals. You can use LIW as a way to market and promote the tremendous contribution that your library or information service makes to educate, inform and entertain your local community. Our nation-wide week combines activities, events, competitions and presentations at national state and local levels.

<http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/liw/2008/>

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