

## **Libraries and STEM Skills for Young Adults**

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Today's young adults:

- Make up 25% of all public library users.
- Are second in size only to the Baby Boomers.
- Are the most ethnically and racially diverse generation ever.

Young adults, ages 12-18, do seek out and value access to materials and services provided by public libraries. YALSA, Young Adult Library Services Association, reported that all teens could benefit from library support. "Libraries can spark an interest in their young adult patrons and... help prepare teens for a 21st century workforce."

Services that young adults appreciate and utilize include free public Internet, free lending materials, lists of recommended reading and websites, formal or informal technology training, and access to online homework help. Each library strives to create a welcoming and supportive environment for young people.

Libraries support the building of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) related skills. Young adults should learn how to perform the basic skills of research by finding and analyzing appropriate and relevant reporting information.

In the 2008 report, "Rising Above the Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future", The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) included the following recommendation: "Make the United States the most attractive setting in which to study and perform research so that we can develop, recruit, and retain the best and brightest students, scientists, and engineers from within the United States and throughout the world." Public libraries are recognized as an essential community resource for providing information, education and programming to support young adult development of STEM-related skills.

Young adults have grown up surrounded by technology; they take its availability for granted. They are skillful at accessing personal and school-related information using mobile devices. However, they are not as skillful in locating credible sources, identifying and sorting through research-based resources and analyzing the information. They can gain skills in understanding and utilizing the vast amount of information that is available. Library staff can assist young adults into becoming skillful researchers.

Libraries with Makerspaces are becoming commonplace. Makerspaces provide opportunities for young people to access resources that will help them develop the skills and knowledge necessary to STEM-related careers. Equipment and scientific-related materials can become costly for individual families to purchase but reasonable when sharing as community resources. Well-staffed libraries with appropriate resources can ensure that our young adults have the access to information and services that will contribute to their future career interests and skill development. They can then become better prepared to enter the many STEM-related careers that have recently come into existence, those that are just emerging, and those still unknown.

Check with the Columbus Public Library about STEM-related services available to our young adults.

"There is not such a cradle of democracy on earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration."

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) Industrialist, Businessman, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist

