

Focused Discussion Session Notes
Central Library Teen Group
Central Library
Fort Worth, Texas
Wednesday, May 29, 2002
4:30 p.m.
Attendance: 8

1. FLIP CHART SUMMARY

Eight teens participated in this session. Two were from the COOL Branch and the others were members of the Teen Advisory Council that meets at the Central Library. One is home schooled and the rest attend several high schools in Fort Worth..

Participants described Fort Worth as “a good city,” “big,” “lots to do,” “boring and fun- a mix,” “not much to do,” “a mixed town with some of everything: old, new, good and bad.” They also mentioned that there were “lots of my people in Fort Worth” and that the city is very “countryish.”

The teens liked a variety of things about Fort Worth:: “girls”; “museums”; “library”; “military bases”; “rivers”; “sports”; “the malls”; “the arcades”; “the streets are walkable”; “the Sundance Square”; “the neighborhoods”; “back roads” and “the people.”

The things they disliked about Fort Worth are: “some teachers”; “the schools”; “the police”; “racist people”; “people’s attitude”; “the neighborhoods”; “people who can’t take a joke”; “the subway”; “the ice-rink and the Tandy being closed”; “too many Starbucks”; “too much Texas pride” and “tornadoes.” They also think that there are too many rules; the people are “too tight” in Fort Worth; and that the Teen Center is too small.

The group named a variety of areas in which they would like to make changes. School and school-related subjects such as the dress code, fights and punishments headed their list. They think that punishing everyone when just a few were involved in an incident is not fair. They would also like to see the driving laws changed. Regarding the police, they said that police officers need sensitivity training; there is racial profiling; and that the police should respond in a timely manner to distress calls. On the topic of libraries, the participants said that more current books as well as newer

and better titles should be acquired. Libraries should also obtain materials on subjects that relate to teens and which they would like to read. The group complained that the bookstores get new releases a year before the library. Finally, they would like to see people withhold judgment: i.e., not make assumptions or have preconceived ideas.

When asked what they wanted to do or learn, the group's answers included the following subjects: "music and the music industry," "military academies," "how to paint," "everything about computers," "[how] to become rich," "[how] to become an actress and singer," "[how] to become a basketball player," "how to help people," "what moves people" and "more about TV."

Hearing the word "library" brought the following associations to mind: "books"; "boring"; "silence"; "nerds"; "little crazy kids running"; "vacation from parents because it is a place they can find solitude"; "fun"; "old blind librarians (they always use glasses)"; "mean librarians"; "SHHH"; "lots of rules"; "librarians with glasses on chains down to their knees (although some are different now, they use contacts, are younger and cooler)." Respondents mentioned that silence makes people stay away from libraries and that libraries are "kind of fun" now that they have computers.

When asked about their last visit to a public library, the participants said the experience was: "cool" because they were helping with a program; "the librarian at the media center is always nice and helpful"; and "some librarians are cool and others have funky attitudes." "The Teen Center was very quiet, there was nobody here." The group felt that the library needs to publicize the Teen Center more.

They would like to see the following items in the libraries: food, vending machines, "lectures about real people's experiences"; "more music programs"; "more new books and get them faster"; big screen TVs, updated CDs and movies, martial arts and self-defense classes and programs; and video games to play on the library's computers and to check-out. They also want the library to publicize the activities in the libraries and Teen Center.

The group's final suggestions were to change the library's image by starting with its physical appearance. The "library has boring colors, even the one at the Mall." "Redo the Teen Center...make it more attractive with some bright colors." Expanding the Teen Center was mentioned. The group suggested that the Teen Board Advisory Council should be involved in the process of changing and renovating the Teen Center. Respondents would like to see Teen Centers in other branches. They also suggested raising funds, updating the computers, and engaging celebrities and authors for speaking engagements.

2. FINDINGS

This was a very energetic and positive group that knew what they wanted and had no problem expressing their thoughts. Throughout the session, participants mentioned the need for stocking newer materials on topics that interested them. These materials should be received in a timely manner as it takes too long for titles to reach the shelves. Respondents were very clear about the types of programs and subjects that would attract teens to the library and make them use it more often.

The group would like to see Teen Centers in other branches along with marketing of those centers and their libraries: e.g., publicity about what types of teen-specific materials can be found in the libraries, programs for teens and the types of resources available to them.

The group thinks that people don't use the library because of its image; thus, it is very important to change the library's appearance. They would start improvements by adding color to the walls to make the library less dull and boring. Not knowing about the library and what it has available also reduces library use. For example, some teens don't know that the library offers CDs and movies. It was stated that teens won't even use the school's library--unless it is for napping as it is "a great place to go when one is tired."

As very active, committed members of the Teen Board Advisory Council, the group would like to participate in the planning process for future library services. At the session's end, they expressed their desire for the library to listen to their suggestions and to check with them before implementing those ideas. They stated that adults tend to hear what they want to hear; that things don't end as the teens wish; and that what is implemented is not really what they wanted. For those reasons, they would like to have some input at a later stage in the planning process. Finally, the group believed that library services should be subject to a vote.

3. SERVICE RESPONSES SUGGESTIONS

- Current Topics and Titles
- Lifelong Learning
- General Information
- Commons

APPENDIX A. FLIP CHART SUMMARY

Number attending: 8

1. How would you describe Fort Worth to a newcomer?

- Big, new world, lots to do
- Boring, not much to do
- Sun and very countryish
- Lots of my people in FW
- Good City
- Mixed town – some of everything – old, new, good, bad
- Boring and fun – mix
- Mixture – every now and then something fun and something boring

2. What do you like about Fort Worth?

- The girls
- Museums
- Library
- Military Bases
- Rivers
- Sports
- Malls
- Arcades
- Movies
- Walking streets
- Sundance Square
- Neighborhoods
- Rivers
- Back roads
- Being at home – sleeping
- The people

3. What do you dislike about Fort Worth?

- Some teachers
- Schools
- Police
- Racist people
- People in general
- Attitudes
- Neighborhoods
- People who can't take a joke
- Subway/Tandy being closed. Ice rink being closed
- Too many rules, too tight
- Too much Texas pride
- Too many Starbucks
- Teen Center too small
- Tornadoes

4. What would you change?

- Schools – dress code, fights, punishments, consequences (punishing everyone when only a few were involved), fairness/equality
- Laws – driving age
- Police – downtown cops OK but need sensitivity training, not nice and not fair, racial profiling, timely police response
- Library – needs current books , newer and better, stuff we want to read, more that relates to us. Get materials in a timely manner, it takes too long to get new books in the library. Bookstores get them a year before the library.
- Judgment – don't assume or have preconceived ideas
- Being able to talk about God
- Hypocrites

5. One thing you would like to learn to do:

- Anything about the music industry
- Anything about the military
- Air Force Academy
- How to paint
- More about computers
- How to get rich

- How to play bass guitar and cello
- How to play the keyboard
- How to be a music producer
- To become an actress and singer
- To become a basketball player
- Everything about computers
- How to help people
- Be the first African-American President
- Own my own radio station
- To figure out, learn why people do things – get into their hearts
- More about TV

6. When you hear the word library, what comes immediately to your mind?

- Books
- Boring
- Silence
- Nerds
- Little bad crazy kids running
- Vacation from parents, time to be by myself
- Fun
- Old blind librarians
- Mean librarians
- SHHHH!!!
- Ruler
- Glasses on chains down to their knees
- Some librarians are different now, they use contacts, some are younger and cooler. Not many old stale anymore – it's changing
- Silence makes people stay away
- Libraries kind of fun now that they have computers

7. Think back to the last time you went to the public library. What do you remember about the experience?

- Cool – I was helping with a program
- I was in 2 weeks ago as part of the Teen Board Advisory group helping with the Summer Reading Program. Helped sign up and hand out flyers
- Visit the Media Center quite often – nice lady and always helpful
- Putting up books (daily routine) - work at the COOL branch

- Some librarians are cool, some have funky attitudes
- Teen Center was very quiet, there was nobody here. Needs to publicize it more, for example, had an open mike program recently and nobody came

8. Why don't people use the library?

- People don't come because of the image of the library – or because people don't know about it, and the types of resources available to them
- Won't even use the one at school because of the image
- Library at school is used when we want to go to sleep, take naps
- Teens don't know what the library has to offer things such as CDs, movies, etc., need to get CDs faster
- Need more new books

9. What would you like to see in your library?

- Food
- Vending machines
- Lectures about real people experiences, for example, World War II
- More music demonstrations
- Need more new books
- Big Screen TVs
- Four Screens – marketing what is going on
- Updated CDs and movies
- Martial arts/self-defense demos and classes
- Video games to play in here and to check-out
- New books faster

10. What other suggestions do you have for us about the Fort Worth Public Library?

- Change the library image – Library has boring colors even the one at the Mall
- Redo the Teen Center – repaint the room, make it more attractive with some bright colors
- Library physical image is boring, dull
- Work closely with Teen Board to change this Teen Center. Needs more room and more work
- Create Teen Centers in other libraries
- Do fundraising
- Promote field trips tied in with books you are reading

- Bring celebrities/authors to speak. For example, Rowling
- Have cameras
- Better computers
- Don't start implementation without talking to us first because it gets screwed up. Adults have a tendency to "create" what we said and things don't wind up like we said, not really what we wanted. They start taking stuff out and blame it on budgets. They take credit for our ideas
- Would like to have some input later on the process – into Service Responses
- Should have some elections/voting for services