This publication speaks to librarians in secondary schools, and it is a relief to find a title which deals with teen behaviour in the library as distinct from library programmes and literacy initiatives. It also has relevance to librarians in public libraries with substantial teen services. This is essentially a reference book for librarians, emphasising the diversity of teens, which requires tolerance, a non-judgmental attitude and exemplary listening skills, even when some of the enquiries and situations are confrontational.

In the first chapter the author examines the relationship between the librarian and teen – the librarian has a position of privilege simply through being an adult, having status, implied respect, self-confidence, knowledge, knowing their way around information sources and having learned strategies for handling requests. The teen clients are often loud with poor social skills, in groups or gangs, strangely dressed and decorated, have poor impulse controls and often undeveloped communication/vocabulary skills. They may have body odour, dreadlocks, distasteful language and may be texting while they are talking to the librarian. Some librarians find it difficult to cope with these clients in a calm and unemotional manner.

Chapters 3-10 examine in detail situational contexts which might arise in enquiries in the school and the public library – sex and sexuality, homeless teens, tattoos and piercings, dating violence and abuse, drugs and alcohol, mental and emotional health, teen violence and juvenile justice and the relationship of teens to contemporary technology. These are discussed in detail, with many examples, typical reference desk enquiries and strategies, including follow-up. In some cases the author discusses whether the enquiry should be referred to a counsellor or social worker. In almost every chapter the author stresses that the first enquiry by a teen may be very difficult, but the librarian needs to listen dispassionately, resist giving unsolicited advice and simply meet the issue at a professional level: despite the seriousness of some issues this first enquiry should not usually be regarded as an emergency but merely the start of a conversation where the librarian needs to be thinking of the next stage and any follow-up required.

Throughout the text there are referrals to websites and databases, and each chapter has a detailed reference list that includes journals, websites, databases and books. There is also a bibliography and index at the end of the book. One of the drawbacks of this title is its very American context, and possibly some librarians may be disappointed that it does not give formulaic answers for the difficult teen questions that they may confront. However, the book’s value more than compensates for these difficulties. Here is a wealth of very readable
information about the nature and the difficulties of dealing meaningfully with
some of the teen community; in coming to appreciate the nature of this group,
derstanding may itself engender a better professional approach. This book is
valuable reading for any adult dealing with the diversity of teen behaviour,
especially where this represents a challenge.

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