This exceptionally practical book targets youth services librarians in public libraries, but it is also relevant to school librarians handling services to children and young adults. It is concerned principally with evaluating the library service to teenagers wherever the library might be. The backbone of the work is a necessary belief in the YALSA Competencies and the YALSA Evaluation Tools (both listed in Chapter 6). There are also comprehensive models of programmes, generic evaluation forms, checklists and website references for every step in the process. Each chapter offers a reference list, mostly using websites.

The work begins with a discussion of the nature of the teen community, including developmental changes, diversity, behaviour and group dynamics. It then moves to the setting of effective and attainable goals and the construction of a data collection methodology. Techniques are offered for analysis and outcomes-based evaluation over all the major functions of the library. A valuable final chapter contains references, resources, sample forms, checklists, policy documents and outcomes-based goal statements. A comprehensive index concludes the work.

The author makes a strong case for using statistical data, though she recognises that many library staff are reluctant to embrace this tool. If data collection can be framed within a statistical format, it can then be used as hard evidence in the arguments for budgets, staffing, library layout and signage, collection development, event costs, library facilities and other targets for improvement. This book attempts to demystify the research process to result in data that meaningfully evaluate services and inform decisions. Outcomes-based measures are the most direct methodology. Essentially this establishes a desired goal and then gathers evidence to examine whether the impact will be positive, attainable and sustainable. Much of the evidence can be collected via the library’s own software, while other data will be collected specifically within a defined timeframe. These data offer a baseline and innovation comparison for parts of the teen library service, and the outcomes can lead to future planning decisions.

The author also asserts that effective library programmes and services to teens must fit into the whole library experience: teen services are not an isolated offshoot of the general library service. A shared belief by library staff, including managers and board, of best practice teen service and the engagement of all the staff in the desire for improvement results in the optimal outcomes in the teen service.
This is an eminently readable, stimulating and inspiring book encouraging all library staff to undertake evaluation in a professional way with useful tools which indicate exciting pathways to improvement.

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