



A space of their own: Redesigning the Toronto Public Library's digital spaces for teens



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Organizational goals

In preparation for the redevelopment of the Toronto Public Library's teen website and related digital media initiatives, the Child and Youth Advocate's Department and E-Services Department, along with the Youth Services Committee, requested a re-examination of TPL's existing approach to digital content for teen library users. They sought a revamped digital space that would be:

- relevant to the unique, diverse interests and needs of TPL's teen audience
- aligned with TPL's Strategic Plan and relevant City of Toronto youth strategies
- responsive to a wide range of current social and cultural events relevant to Toronto teens

Project goals

- Conduct a wide-ranging environmental scan of contemporary teen digital media sources, uses, and practices, within and beyond the Toronto Public Library context
- Produce a comprehensive written report on same, including recommendations for further planning and development
- Offer mutually beneficial, valuable practicum experience, providing an opportunity for meaningful contribution to organizational goals and needs, and leveraging relevant student skills, experience, and knowledge

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Research process: Environmental scan

External context

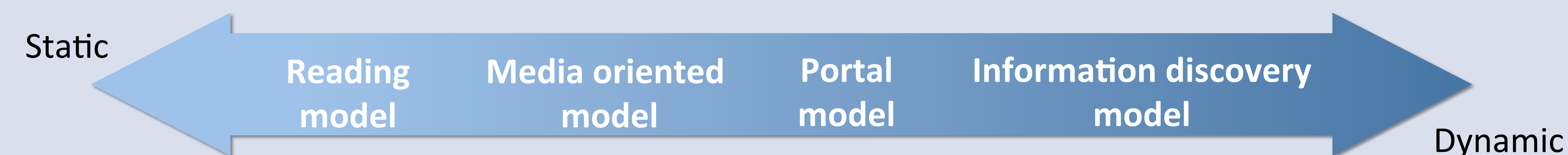
Conduct literature review on teen digital media production, consumption, and use

- Demographic view (Pew Research Center, Kaiser Foundation, private sector market research)
- Web usability research (Loranger & Nielsen, 2013)
- Scholarly research
 - "productive space" (Kearney, 2007) and "creative production" (Greenaway, 2001; Pepler & Kafai, 2007)
 - "participatory culture" (Jenkins et al., 2006)
 - "hanging out, messing around, geeking out" (Ito et al., 2010)
 - "networked publics" (boyd, 2014)

Review relevant policy on digital spaces and new media learning

- National teen space guidelines (YALSA, 2012)
- 21st century learning outcomes (AASL, 2007)

Research comparable teen library website models (Naughton, 2015)

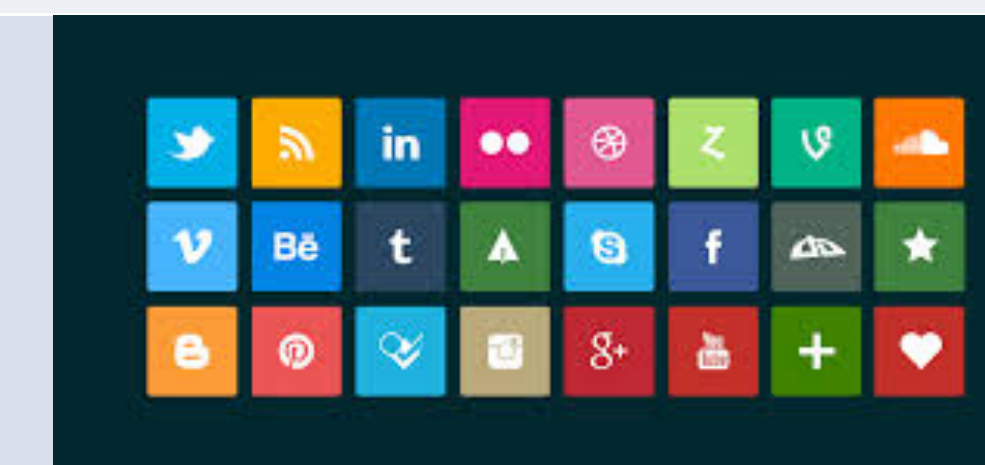


Research teen-focused local/national/international trends and events (one-off, ongoing, seasonal)

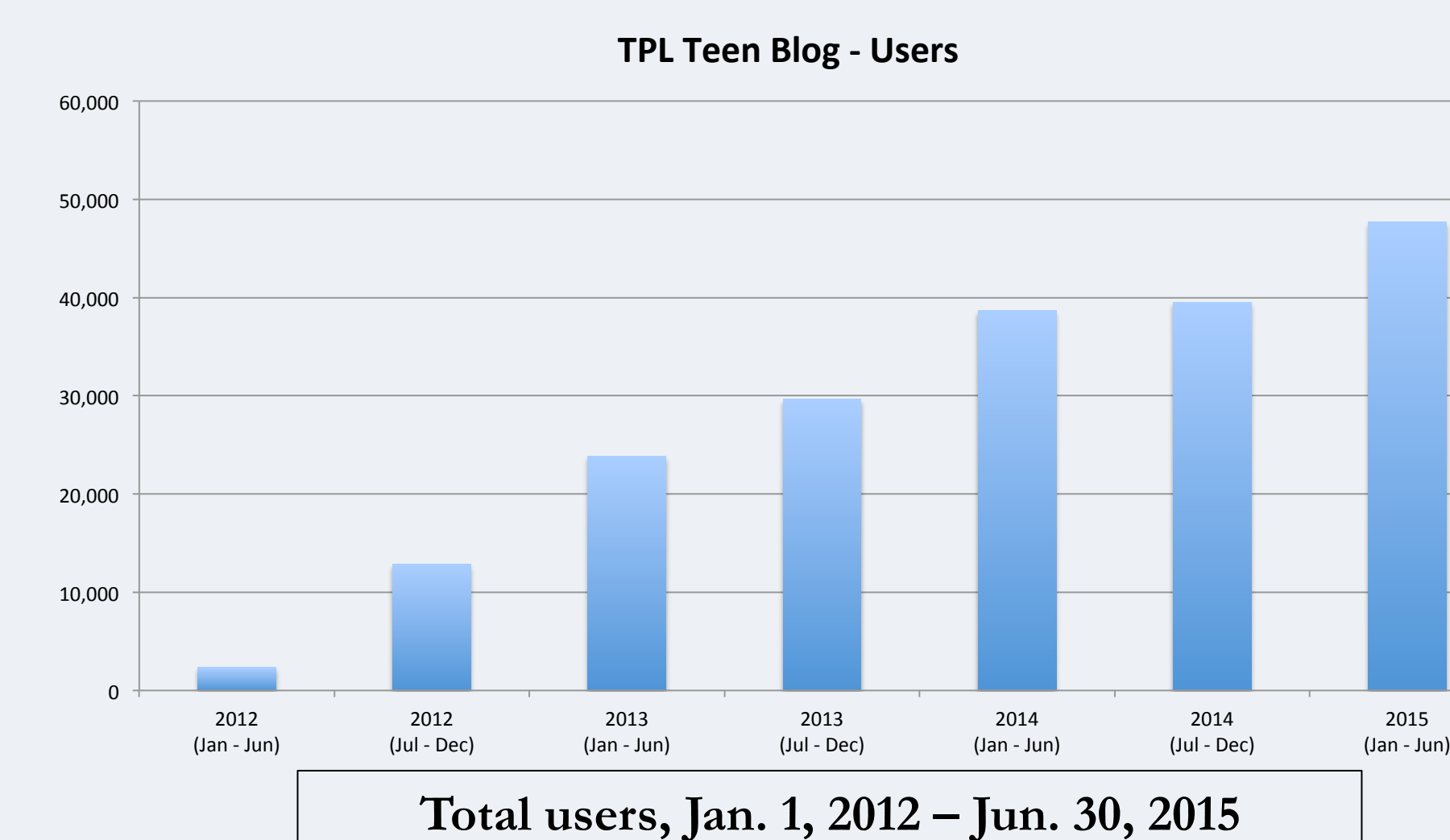
Internal context

Review existing TPL web presence and digital media outlets for teens

- TPL Teens website/blog
- relevant social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, YouTube



Gather performance data for TPL Teens blog via Google Analytics



Review TPL Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015

Consult with key TPL staff and committees

- Youth Services Committee
- TPL Teens Summer Edition Working Group
- Young Voices Working Group
- Teen Social Media Team

Consult with TPL Editorial Youth Advisory Group to gather input

- Offer opportunities for peer feedback and discussion
- Make it hands on
- Add search tools
- Showcase *Young Voices* (TPL's magazine of teen writing and art)
- Include more information on jobs/volunteering, how to get published, creative writing workshops
- Use humour: GIFs, top-ten lists, memes
- Feature more contests

Examine library's role in City of Toronto strategies and relationships with City partners

Recommendations

Consult meaningfully and regularly with teen users at all levels of process, and leverage capacity in TPL youth leadership (YAG members, youth advisors to TPL Board, etc.)

Align design with TPL strategic plan, YALSA and AASL guidelines, and teen developmental assets

Move from information "push" to participatory culture model

- involve teen users in the design, construction, content development, and maintenance of new site:
 - adapt existing programs and leverage facilities, especially Digital Innovation Hubs, to incubate teen skill-building and content creation processes
 - solicit and showcase user generated content (UGC) reviews, videos, recordings/podcasts, games, playlists, and other creative work on all teen-focused communications, including website, social media content, and teen e-newsletter
 - develop site tools emphasizing interactivity and community: user forums and micro-blogging platforms, text/chat capabilities, interactive forms, quizzes, etc.

Create Youth Advisory Group with focus on web redevelopment

Retain, augment, or update content coverage in

- job/volunteer opportunities
- YAGs
- *Young Voices*
- TPL Teens - Summer Edition
- teen events and programs
- booklists
- teen e-newsletter

Add content coverage in

- pop culture and current events (based on holistic understanding of contemporary literacies)
- teen-specific homework and research help tools, guides, and videos (emphasizing 21st century learning)
- post-secondary education preparation
- physical/mental health information (including relationships, stress, etc.)
- financial literacy information

Key references

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