

Kimberly Patton is Macmillan's First Librarian of the Month

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Macmillan's Library Marketing department is proud to present Kimberly Patton as its first Librarian of the Month. Kimberly Patton is the Young Adult Specialist for the [Lawrence Public Library](#) in Lawrence, Kansas. Ms. Patton recently served as chair of the Teen Manual Committee at the Collaborative Summer Library Program, and is co-author of *A Year of Programming for Teens* (ALA Editions, 2006). We asked Ms. Patton to share her insights on teen involvement at the library.



How does the Lawrence Public Library come up with programs for teens?

We have a monthly Young Adult Advisory Board (YAAB) meeting, where we meet to go over what programs we are going to have. We share book reviews and I put written ones on our website, then we follow the reviews with a special program.

In February it was our annual Chocolate Festival, where we learn about the history of chocolate, we sample various kinds and vote on our favorite, and we do some sort of chocolate craft. This year, we painted with chocolate and had a chocolate trivia contest. We also held a week long Mardi Gras program after school. Teens came in every day and made masks, or voodoo dolls, (they had to supply their own pins and potions). We gave out "King cake" cupcakes with prizes, beads, boas, everything but the parades and floats. This month, we are having our first Rock the Vote concert with the [Whomping Willows](#) of Wizard Rock fame, a group of musicians who play Harry Potter-inspired tunes who are traveling the country.

Battle of the Bands, Fear Factor Challenges, Library Survivor scavenger hunts—we try to cover the gamut. I will do whatever kind of a program it takes to get them in the door of the library.

No matter what programs we do for fun, this IS a library, so I take a cart of books in to booktalk. If I can find books to go with the subject of the program great; if not, I'll booktalk new ones, or old favorites. As important as it is to get teens in the door, it's more important to get them to leave with a book, or five. And to get them talking about what they are reading and why.

What programs have been most effective in bringing teens to your library?

Variety of programming helps. Also, I go to each and every school in town on a regular basis to booktalk and promote our programs. Then when young adults get to the library, we try to make it as inviting for them as possible. For example, we have Sound Cones, which are speakers that direct the sound straight down instead of bouncing it off the walls, so we can play music 24/7 without disrupting the rest of the

library. We have the books and music and games that they want when they want them. That all helps.

What programs have you tried that you did not find effective?

Oh there are flops. We tried storytelling for teens, to teach them how to tell stories. Huge flop. We tried creative writing workshops. Huger flop. I had teens telling me they were all excited, they write me poems and stories all the time. No one came. No. One. It was sad.

What books have your teen book clubs read recently? How do you pick titles?

I read reviews. I write reviews. So I always have a pretty good grip on what's coming out. I use the [YALSA nominating lists](#)—I figure if it's good enough to get someone's attention to nominate it, its worth a second look.

My teens help too at YAAB meetings. I have some avid readers. They know so much about what is coming out that they now know my ALA schedule and they give me lists of advance copies to bring back. When I mail the boxes of books back from conference, it's almost like Christmas for them.

What genres are becoming more popular with teens at the Lawrence Public Library? Why do you think they like these books?

Well here the most popular books are anything with vampires or dragons. All the girly series books, like the **Gossip Girls, Clique, Private**. The books by Libba Bray are all very popular. Books about teens dealing with "issues" are still big. What I don't really see are teens reading a whole lot of historical fiction anymore. Surprisingly, to me anyway, is that teens are reading a lot of biographies too.

What tips do you have for librarians looking to improve their booktalking techniques?

1. Know the books you are booktalking.
2. Know your audience (the age, likes, dislikes, special school project, etc.).
3. Know what you want to say about the book. I sometimes write it out on a note card and tape it to the back of the book. That way when you hold up the book, you can see your note, but the audience can't.
4. Practice out loud, in front of the mirror.

What websites do you like to visit?

A few of my favs are [teenreads.com](#); Jen Hubert's [Reading Rants](#) is one of my all time favs. [Pop Matters](#) is another great one. [YALSA's blog](#) and site are daily must reads. My secret guilty pleasure is [TMZ](#) but don't tell anyone. I'll deny it.

Is there anything you would like to add about working with teens?

Relax, the teens won't hurt you. They may even like you. I guarantee that you will end up loving them! I'm convinced that I look as young as I do because I love what I do every day.