How Young Adult Readers select fiction in public libraries: a study of the factors which influence information-seeking in context

By Rachel Randall

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Victoria University of Wellington
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Abstract

Research Problem: The purpose of this research paper is to observe the information-seeking behaviour and book selection methods of the youth today, mainly in the public library context. There are so many questions, and prescribed answers as to how young adults seek reading material for themselves, who and what influences them, what is the best way to communicate with them, as well as how technology effects these processes. There are few recent research articles on this topic, and no qualitative-research examples, which prevent us from uncovering rich, genuine data about how young adults respond to aspects such was Web 2.0, peer influence, family influence, teacher/librarian influence, the introduction of new collections, book displays, youthful-looking book covers and so forth.

Methodology: Qualitative research methods used. Focus groups were conducted with 3 groups, each consisting of 8-11 teenagers, who are members of Auckland Libraries.

Results: We can observe that for optimal effect on young adults, public libraries (or even publishing houses, bookstores and schools) is to be wiser and more focused with some services, and to understand what young adults are actually seeking. It is about giving a facelift to some current services, re-organizing the collection, re-thinking how the web and Web 2.0 is used, and being more strategic in establishing personal relationships with young adults.

Implications: This research offers theoretical grounding within a comprehensive literature review of as much current information examples as possible. It also offers practical lessons, offered by the examples given from the young adults themselves, which public libraries may or may not choose to employ, in order to draw young adults to their services, to use their collections, and to stay as members for life.

Keywords: Book selection, Web 2.0, information-seeking/information-searching, search/browse, fan fiction, influence, literacy, public libraries, youth, young adult

Contents

1. Introduction- Problem statement

The purpose of this proposed qualitative study will be to examine the ways in which young adult patrons of Auckland Libraries select fiction materials for personal reading and whether the current services available to aid book selection have been helpful.

1.1 Definition of the 'young adult'

The young adult group is defined as any patron within the age range of 12-24 years and is the common band used by researchers in the field of Young Adult literacy, for example the Young Adult Library Services Association (Marra & Witteveen, 2005). However, reading age/maturity may contribute to the fact that several readers may read outside the young adult fiction collection and instead look to either the junior fiction or adult fiction collections, thus for the purposes of this study, young adults should and will be consulted on the ways in which they select any type of fiction.

1.2 The Post Web 2.0 discussion

Existing research has been conducted on the ways and strategies in which adults select fiction materials for themselves and to what degree services at the library aid this process and have revealed that the presence of staff with good reader's advisory and displays are deemed most useful to good book selection (Ooi, 2008).Whilst Ooi (2008) concluded that the applications of Web 2.0 knowledge via the library website and social media sites made little impact on book selection, it is possible that the current younger generation may react differently towards this technology.

Extensive recent research has thus been conducted to promote the merits of using social media to recommend and endorse book collections but these tend to focus heavily on

what *can be* achieved as opposed to the actual effectiveness (Horn, 2011; Rivero, 2010). Articles by Cahill (2012) about the social media plans of Vancouver Public Library or updates on the social media front in American public libraries (Lietzau & Helgren, 2011) both give inspiring Facebook usage statistics. Notably, any kind of feedback or opinion from actual young adult readers is amiss from the mentioned studies above. Hence this study has aimed to include young adult opinions when investigating how social media tools like Facebook, blogs and readers advisory sites can be used in more efficient and smarter ways in order to appeal to our young adult readers. What kind of social media contact are they seeking?

1.3 The Gaps

Notably, to date, there is little recent research that firstly, attempts to examine how young adults search for *general* fiction materials for themselves and secondly, attempts to collect feedback from young adult patrons themselves about the usefulness of library services in aiding their book selection. The available studies on young adult book selection mainly focus on how young adults select fiction specifically from the young adults collection which is not a thorough analysis. The outcomes of this research will benefit public libraries by identifying which strategies of promoting their collections to young adult patrons are most effective, as well as indicating whether new strategies need to be considered, and current ones, improved.

Maynard, Mackay & Smyth's (2008) and Miller's (2011) research on book selection amongst children and young teenagers are two examples of rare studies on this topic and the focus is largely on selecting books in general, and there is little attention paid to public library services in their method and data collection. I felt that it was important to produce such a study which is in the context of public library products and services so that these may be improved and updated.

This is a particularly exciting time to conduct a research topic such as there are so many new influences on one's information searching behaviour: the effects of social media, fan fiction and too much information on the web.

1.4 Delimitations/Limitations

Delimitations

- Due to the time/resource constraints of this 580 research project, this research is confined to young adults within the Auckland region who are members of Auckland Libraries

Limitations

- I will be going to public libraries around Auckland to look for volunteers

2. Literature Review

In the previous literature review which I created for the proposal to this project, I had looked laterally at studies and research on the trends in teenage publication, perceptions of the library and its young adult services, and the effects of social media on the average young adult and young adult public library users. My evaluation of these resources focused on outlining their strengths and limitations. I have been commenting on the same resources through the research project but approaching my synthesis from the point of now having some data of my own to compare and contrast with. I have since found more useful resources to evaluate in this literature review, not only from well-known journals and similar research studies, but newspaper articles and blogs run by avid young adult readers and reviewers, authors as well as associations like YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association). These additions have been most appropriate in relation to my research topic and my interest in the post Web 2.0 discussion. Besides once more giving a summary of the literature that is out there and conducting a fair evaluation, my objective with this literature review has also been to reflect the questions which have still not been answered – so reinforcing the 'gaps' I indentified earlier. This will hopefully be an effective prelude into discussion about my actual research and findings.

2.1 Perceptions of young adult readers on the effectiveness of young adult services in public libraries

Public libraries have a lot of potential to encourage literacy and a love for reading amongst their young adult library patrons – but simply may not be aware of what these young adults think about the library's collection or its services.

Bishop & Bauer (2002) have focussed on the effectiveness of young adult librarians or liaisons in promoting physical resources in the library. From a quantitative-style survey where young adult library patrons and young adult librarians/liaisons were asked to rank the importance of certain services, young adult respondents gave a high rating to reader's advisory knowledge from librarians who have been trained to answer homework-related queries or have knowledge of reading materials for young adults (Bishop & Bauer, 2002). Whilst a majority of the librarians/liaisons doubted the effectiveness of hosting book-talks in schools or the library itself, young adult respondents rated this service highly (Bishop & Bauer, 2002). Interestingly, a majority of young adult patrons also rated book displays as being an incredibly important service (Bishop & Bauer, 2002).

Cart (2007)'s piece continues to also focus on the presence of young adult librarians in library branches, particularly those who can understand the new ways in which young adults are reading. Cart (2007) uses a wonderful quote from young adult author and specialist Marc Aronson who has stated that the new "diet of the Young Adult reader" is made up of a "mixture of fiction, digital information, non-fiction and assigned reading" (Cart, 2007, p. 53) and asserts that to the average young adult reader, the notion that 'fiction' material only exist in print or literary form must be abandoned (Cart, 2007). Due to increasingly fast-paced lifestyles and technology, teenagers are consuming fiction through audiobooks, e-books and graphic novels.

Finally, at the very base of the matter, the issue of service delivery can be a making point or breaking point in 'enticing' teenagers into the library, in the first place (Snowball, 2007). Both Snowball (2007) and Cassel & Walther (2006) focus on long-term planning and observing the

phases of planning when it comes to service delivery, particular to the complex group of young adult patrons. Snowball's (2007) proposal of including young adults themselves in the planning of young adult services may require significantly more care and discernment, but in the long run, is not always about adding *new* services, but giving a facelift to old ones and even culling services which are no longer relevant/no longer working. Cassel & Walther (2006) are also promoters of this philosophy, and from their focus group sessions with young adults, confirm that making the library a physically relevant place for young people, encourages them to join in youth programmes and makes them want to stay on in libraries for life.

2.3 Peer, teacher, librarian and family influence on general book selection choices

In Ooi's (2008) research of the factors which influence adult readers in their fiction selection, human sources rated most highly and thus in the case of the even more easily-influenced group of young adults, it is hardly surprising that the studies on the topic by Fitzgerald (2006, 2009), Howard (2010), Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008), Miller (2011) Swenor (2006), and the National Library of New Zealand (2012) focus on the influence of peers, parents and teachers.

It is particularly interesting to observe that different studies elect different groups as being the 'main' influence and this seems to depend on how old the young adult in question is, the gender and occasionally, the kind of socio-economic background. This is a poignant reminder that even within this specific age group, several sub-groups exist. In Maynard, Mackay & Smyth's (2008) extremely thorough mixed-methods study in which respondents included children as well as early teenagers (tweens), the authors have analysed that the younger the young adult, the more likely he/she is to take book recommendations from parents and teachers over his/her friends. Fitzgerald's (2006, 2009) research has been the mos-t beneficial to my research objectives, but a little outdated. However Fitzgerald's (2009) online survey with teenagers suggests that family influence in terms of book selection seems to play just an important of a role as peer influence.

Whereas, Howard (2010) and Miller (2011), who have focused on some of the older young adult groups, would argue that peer influence plays the most dominant role of all in not only book recommendations, but with book selection. Howard (2010)'s created taxonomy of teen readers project identifies a majority of young adults to be 'social communal readers' or 'communal readers' at varying degrees. This includes cases where a particular book may make its round amongst a circle of friends or a group of friends will set out to purchase/borrow identical copies of a particular book to cases where friends may casually recommend titles to one another and read books from similar genres (Howard, 2010).

2.4 How physical and literary factors can influence general book selection choices

According to the research of Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008), Swenor (2006), Miller (2011) and Fitzgerald (2006), the physical process of browsing through the library still plays a significant role in how young adults borrow books. What can be interpreted from Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) is that the younger the young adult, the more factors like book covers, font-size and book-size matter when it comes to book selection. The older the teen, the more likely he/her is to consider the title of the book, *why* the book's plotline is relevant to his/her situation or whether the book's main character is someone he/she can identify with (Maynard, Mackay & Smyth, 2008). Book blurbs were reported as being influential factors for this reason (Maynard, Mackay & Smyth, 2008). Interestingly, Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) have observed that a small proportion of their respondents would intentionally look for books in a series as this provided them with the opportunity to keep reading about "the same characters" (p. 247).

The issue of book covers is an interesting study in itself as covers can be interpreted so differently by different viewers. As Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) and Fitzgerald (2006) piece reported similar results in that whilst teenage readers paid attention to covers, this would be in conjunction with other aspects about the book. However, one blogger on YALSA's The Hub, shares the fresh opinion that the influence of graphic novels have changed the significance of the book cover (Guest Blogger – YALSA's The Hub, 2012). Artwork is now a prominent comparison factor amongst teenagers, and affects one status when, "Teens deserve books with cover art that won't encourage incredulous stares or embarrassing side-glances" (Guest Blogger – YALSA's The Hub, 2012). Book covers matter, but it would seem that there is a fine line between appealing to young adults with youthful graphics and design schemes and being patronizing. Both Abrams' (2012) and Bosman's (2012) articles comment on publisher's latest trend of 'pimping out' (Abrams, 2012) the covers of classics such as *Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre* and so forth. The idea is to strip away tradition, which is apparently polarizing to the teens, and go with bold graphics and bold looking characters or symbols who/that are trendy and fashionable.

Following the latest trend of Web 2.0 in libraries, it seemed obvious to include notable blogs and online forums which discuss teens and their attraction to certain types of books. Kiki Hamilton (2011), a notable fantasy-fiction author (whose works are published as both young adult fiction and adult fiction) describes her blog as the latest way to reach out to a younger generation of fans, and to source ideas for new material. In the blog post which has been selected for this literature review, Hamilton (2011) muses over the survey sponsored by Random House, Macmillan, Penguin, Scholastic and Little on consumer attitudes towards junior and young adult publications. Contrary to what some of the above sources have concluded, Hamilton (2011) focuses on the fact that, when treated separately, things like book blurbs, covers, awards and celebrity endorsements are not the main appealing factors to the average young adult. Rather, "...Sequels are the most popular factor, followed by familiarity with author, and back and flap copy. The whole package counts, with the title and cover each affecting nearly one third of selections" (Hamilton, 2010). If one observes Amazon.com's latest Best Sellers for Young Adults list, 10 out of the 26 listed options are series-based works, and this does not even include Stephenie Meyer's famed *Twilight* series. It is casually known that series are popular amongst young adults. There are numerous reader's advisory blog-posts which reflect a serial fascination with sequels (TwoBusyBrunettes, 2012).

Aspects such as book covers, sequels and other notable physical attributes about books seem extremely influential. Research on the reading habits of young adults and social media commentators allude to this, but there is little concrete feedback from young adults themselves on the reasoning behind this.

2.5 Web 2.0 influence on general book selection choices

To date, there is a plethora of published material which discusses the benefits of incorporating Web 2.0 in libraries, particularly, using social media to influence young adult library patrons in their book selections. The research and articles by Fitzgerald (2009), Rivero (2010), Hill (2010), Agosto & Hughes-Hassell (2005) and Horn (2011) can be described as similar commentary on the Web 2.0 hype and sermon to public libraries on adopting the assortment of Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and blog.

However, even within the topic of social media, specific aspects need to be focussed on for further definition. Studies by Cahill (2011), who talks about social media and its effects on Vancouver Public Library as well as Lietzau and Helgren (2011) from Colorado State Library, both promote libraries finding a space for themselves on Twitter, Facebook and starting their own reader's advisory blogs. Lietzau and Helgren (2011)'s environmental scan is particularly interesting, in that they are noting that library blogs, containing reviews and readers advisory opinions by staff, are losing "lustre" in comparison to social media sites (p.15). The suggestion is to encourage conversation about services and products, as well as reader's advisory on these social media sites which people are more likely to be on anyway (Lietzau and Helgren, 2011).

Since the start of 2012, research and opinion articles which promote stimulating post Web 2.0 discusstions have surfaced. Yes, young adults and teenagers of today are certainly more reliant on digital technologies and are offered numerous options and ways to maintain a strong online presence throughout their daily activities – but there is little conclusive research about which explains *how* these 'millennials' or 'generation Z-ers' are actually *using* the internet and engaging with Web 2.0. Kilian, Hennigs & Langer's (2012) research is based on an online questionnaire which divided millennial respondents into three main groups: the Restrained Millennials, the Entertainment-Seeking Millennials, the the Highly connected Millennials. The main point of the research was to prove that not all teenagers/young adults use the internet in the same way – and interestingly, the largest group consisted of the Restrained Millennials – a group which were connected to the internet, social media and a variety of Web 2.0 networks but also

reliant on more 'traditional' sources of information such as physical magazines, the newspaper, physical books, radio, television and clubs for their information needs.

The main issue which is still being overlooked, and this potentially relates more closely to young adults, is what customers actually expect from a library Facebook page, and this presents itself as a post Web 2.0 discussion. Cahill's (2011) study has a section which focuses specifically on young adults, and notes that young adults appreciate the personal service which can be achieved through Facebook, for example, using Facebook Chat to ask a staff member to request or renew an item for them, asking for help in finding resources.

Coles & Nagy's (2012) research on Facebook usage amongst high school students is most interesting in this respect. There is the perception that young adults are using social media networks in order to find *new* friends in the virtual world, or, in other words, communities outside their physical ones, however, in reality, a majority of students who responded in the survey mainly used Facebook to interact with people in their own circles (school, church, sports clubs, etc). Perhaps young adults would rather chat to a specific library staff member on Facebook about books. Perhaps Twitter feeds or Facebook polls/articles about the latest fan fiction, which are the new forms of peer pressure, also aid in book selection. Do young adult library patrons want to have book discussions with just any old staff member – or would they rather seek staff they know personally? In which case, libraries may need to make adjustments to their social media efforts.

2.6 Google versus the library website and reader's advisory blogs

To follow on from reviewing the resources above, a larger aspect of the post Web 2.0 discussion is observing the information-seeking behaviours of our younger generation. We know that young adults and teenagers spend a lot of time on the internet through digital or mobile technology devices and this meagre knowledge has egged on more interactive library websites, library social media accounts, library pages on reader's advisory sites – all in the bid to promote their goods and services. One assumes that because something is on the internet that young adults or teenagers will be certain to see it, though this is a poor assumption.

Researchers have been attempting to affirm this reality check about young adults and technology for some time now. Selwyn (2009), Serantes (2009) and Seal-Wanner (2006) have produced research/review pieces which are well-cited and quite a few years old. The common theme in these three research pieces revolved around the observation that the average young adult still a) does not have much perspective on the influence of Web 2.0, b) does not go out of his/her way to find Web 2.0 networks and c) would rather use generic search engines like Google or information providers such as YouTube and Wikipedia to satisfy their information needs. (Selwyn, 2009; Serantes, 2009; Seal-Wanner, 2006). Serantes' (2009) article, a general review of existing discourse and research, comes the closest in terms of genuine observations. Serantes (2009) deduces that at the end of the day, young adults use the internet to find information *on their own terms;* and this must be a convenient, entertaining, easily-accessible, no-strings-attached transaction. Library websites which have gone out of their way to create complex reader's advisory blogs, which encourage patron reviews in turn, have simply been disappointed with the lack of user interaction. Selwyn (2009) notes that ultimately, even in their web-relationships and searches, the average teenager sticks to personal networks/networks they are already familiar with in real life. Teenagers will read blogs written by their friends, look at videos posted by their friends, create wiki's with a friendship circle – but they will not go out of their way to see what else is out there (Selwyn, 2009)

Virkus & Bamigbola (2011) have noted that today's millennial is overwhelmed with the wealth of information on the web, and simultaneously, unwilling to refine their search/browse behaviour. Rather than look for notable online journals or more academic databases, Google Scholar is the preferred choice for schoolwork. For information on travel, fashion, music, or popular opinions, Google, YouTube and particularly, Wikipedia, are the favoured choices due to the easy 'one search bar' interface which is then sure to provide an Idiot's-guide-esque summary of only the most important facts (Virkus & Bamigbola, 2011; Ashraf, 2009). If young adults are using these search options to seek more information about film and music, it is highly likely that that Wikipedia is also a huge influence on their book selection choices as well. If this is the case, it would be interesting to observe *how* this process occurs, and retain more conclusive data on Wikipedia's appeal.

Conclusion

Reviewing all this literature has made me aware of some of the obvious gaps within this complex study of the ways in which young adults select material for themselves, how and why. The mainly-quantitative studies which I looked at reflected feedback responses and results as to some methods which young adults use to select material but there was little explanation as to why. Overall, through interviews or surveys, a majority of the studies were specifically observing the book selection amongst young adult materials rather than general materials. Also, despite the available literature which suggests that young adults today are more influenced by technology and social media, many of the studies which contained interviews or surveys about book selection or information searching behaviour brush over genuine, individual opinions from real young adults and teenagers which leads me to wonder if millennials have been unfairly misjudged, and hence libraries, publishing companies and bookstores have been attempting to reach out to them in less than effective ways. My study seeks to fill some of these gaps and based on the methods shared by Cart (2007) and Fitzgerald (2009), I have concluded that a qualitative study would be most appropriate and that conducting interviews via focus groups would be an effective method that will work with young adults.

3. Research Design

In this chapter I will be discussing the research design behind my project. I will share the study objectives which were formed after my initial observations and conducting the literature review. I share my research questions which formed the basis for the questions I asked the teenagers in my teenage focus groups. I will explain why I felt that a qualitative study approach was the most appropriate method for this project. I will ask talk more about my research population, my methods of data collection, data analysis, the delimitations and limitations of my project as well as the organisation and presentation of my findings in this report. Ooi's (2008) own MIS research project was one of my main reference points throughout my own data collection and analysis process as I see my project as an extension of hers, focusing on another group of readers.

3.1 Study Objectives

As mentioned in the conclusion of my literature review, I was greatly affected by the number of research articles and review articles which have already started their own post Web 2.0 discussion. These articles discuss the effects of social media, the media, personal relationships, celebrity-fan relationships, hype, book covers – which, I believed, all play a role to some degree in the way young adults today select fiction for themselves, but I wanted to know exactly *how* and *why* this works, on a personal level. These questions formed the basis of my study objectives:

1. To identify, from an actual young adult's perspective, what and who influences the way young adults select general fiction for themselves. Within the *what,* I wanted to know *which* (for example, *which* social media sites appeal, which don't and *why*).
2. To uncover who were the people which influence young adults in their book selection as an attempt to refute the assumption that peers and friends are the *only* influence.

3. To gain rich data on the information seeking behaviour of young adults in the public library and outside the public library, and the motivation behind these behaviours.

4. To examine how affected young adults are by 'hyped' books, media, film and music

5. To ascertain just how aware young adults are of the ways in which publishing companies, public libraries and other organisations are attempting to reach out to them through the media and social media.

3.2 Research Questions

RQ1: Which groups of people or individuals play a part in influencing the book selection choices of young adults? How are these relationships cultivated and how does the communication about the book selection take place?

RQ2: How are young adults influenced by social media when it comes to personal book selection? What particular aspects of social media (i.e. the type of forum, the interface, the interaction, etc) applications encourage book selection suggestions, interaction, discussion – and why?

RQ3: What traditional aspects and features (for e.g. book displays, details of the physical book) play a part in influencing the book selection choices of young adults? How do teenagers search/browse for materials both inside the library and online via the web catalogue?

3.3 Justification for qualitative study

The central aim of my study was to gain insight from young adult readers about how personal relationships, social media and trends affected their individual methods and strategies when it comes to book selection at their public library. I was very interested in *why* and collecting unrestricted, rich data. These reasons relate to social issues and structures which are said to be specific to young adults such as peer pressure, role-modelling, social media and pop culture and these objectives would certainly fall under the "traditions" of qualitative research (Bryman, 2008, p. 367). As mentioned previously, I was not so much interested in measurements or averages as I was in genuine, individual responses from participants in the study. These qualities would certainly fall under another tradition of qualitative research: naturalism (Bryman, 2008; Olson, 2011). Thus undertaking a qualitative study was most beneficial for this research topic.

Young adults are an incredibly complex group to interview, whether in focus groups or as individuals. Many of the studies quoted in the literature review used written surveys as a means of communication, and as a result, the potential for spontaneous and genuine responses has been limited. McCartan, Schubotz & Murphy (2012) discuss the merits of engaging with young people in research studies, especially through the use of focus groups as young people feel more comfortable in the presence of peers, and will feel more comfortable speaking in their own terms and bouncing ideas off one another. I was interested in these methods when combined with the philosophy that whilst some interview questions may be prepared, some may have to be conceived spontaneously for the sake of "knowledge production" (Stake, 2010, p.16).   Stake (2010) describes one of the main objectives of qualitative research as being "knowledge production" and unlike quantitative research which is based on carefully measured collection methods in which the researcher prefers to take a macro approach, qualitative research aims to collect personal, "experiential data" (p. 16).

Branwaithe & Patterson (2011)'s reflections on their interaction with young people include the reminder that good interviewing skills are crucial. As opposed to the quantitative interview, which would traditionally be quite structured, and responses have to fit into specific categories, qualitative methods involve a heavy amount of interpretation both during the interview and after

the interview. Both Qu & Dumay (2011) and Stake (2011) support these observations, saying that the other name for the qualitative interview is the interpretative interview. Interpretative methods include probing discussion or more in-depth discussion in the middle of the interview, spontaneous questioning, questioning which inspires overly descriptive answers, opinions, ideas and expressions; the interviewer is being interpretative in the very process of the interview (Packer, 2011).

The qualitative analysis process, described by both Packer (2011) and Stake (2011), in which aspects such as expression, content and form are dissected down, was also more appropriate for my objectives. This will be expanded upon under **'5. Analysis Techniques.'**

3.4 Research Population

The central focus of my study was to understand the factors which influence the way young adults select fiction materials for themselves in the setting of the public library. Hence, it made sense to use public library branches as a base for recruiting volunteers for interviews.

Sample size

Naylor, Stoffel & Van Der Laan (2008) have referenced the study of the Pew Internet and American Life Project as a guide for which they set up their own focus groups amongst undergraduate students; the project interviewed 38 high-school young adults via 4 focus groups. This translates to roughly 9-10 participants in a focus group and fits with bracket which Stake (2010) recommends for focus groups: 7-12. Along these guidelines I interviewed 3 focus groups, each consisting of 8-11 young adult participants. As Bryman (2008) affirms, interviewing just one group will not "suffice the needs of the researcher" (p. 477) but working with three groups has provided enough scope and detail, in regards to my research objectives .

Selection criteria

All candidates needed to be public library members as I wanted to examine the information searching behaviour of these young adults within a public library context.

As mentioned in my introduction, the term young adult can cover anyone between the ages of 12 to 24 years. I wished to focus on the extreme middle group within this group: the teenagers. As my aim was to encourage sharing of rich data in the focus groups, I was aware that it would be best that members within the groups were all of similar maturity levels, and thus I selected a close age-range requirement: ages 15 to 18 years.

Methods of recruitment

Due to my previous role as Senior Librarian – Children and Youth at Tupu Youth Library (my responsibility is mainly in youth services), I have had the privilege of working with a wide

network of other young adult librarians or liaisons, school staff members and young adults. The process which I used was snowball sampling. For example, I approached staff members at schools or staff members from other public libraries to recommend students who would be interested in being part of my project. I spoke to a few teenagers that I already have close, professional relationships with, through work. The ones who were keen to participate in the project recommended friends who would also be interested in being part of the focus groups. Due to the fact that some of the volunteers were 15 years old, I created two sets of information sheets: for potential participants and for the guardians of the potential participants. Similarly, I also had two sets of consent forms.

I followed the recommendations of Cassel & Walther (2006), who promote the idea that the best way to get customer feedback from teenagers and children is to have a good, professional, but *personal* relationship with these younger members who use the library. I have viewed research on a similar topic, though in relationship to *adult* readers, which recommended using volunteers who have no personal relationship to the researcher to "minimize bias" (Ooi, 2008, p. 25), however, as Fitzgerald (2009) observes, teenagers tend to be more candid and frank when engaging with people they have had personal relationships with.

3.5 Methods of data collection

In this section I will discuss my reasons for using focus groups, my compliance with ethical guidelines, the focus group settings as well as the ways in which I prepared myself for the focus group and how this was executed in the sessions.

Using Focus Groups

As I mentioned above, experienced researchers in this area of LIS literature such as Cart (2007), Fitzgerald (2009) and Qu & Dumay (2011) have promoted the use of focus groups as a laidback yet provocative environment for discussion. Agosto & Hughes-Hassell (2005) have found that this way, the participants can find support and confidence from within their peer group. As Cassel & Walther (2006) and Corradini (2006) have also observed, teenagers are often more honest and candid when talking about library programs or services when they are in the presence of those in the same age groups who may have similar needs or ideas.

Compliance with ethical considerations

Before I even started the recruiting process, I applied for and obtained approval from Victoria University's Human Ethics Committee. Their main concern was ensuring that the differences between my guardian consent forms and information sheets, and the general ones, were obvious. In compliance with the Committee's guidelines, I ensured that the identities of my participants remained confidential by only using generic codenames to when referring to them in the report, e.g. 'Participant, 16'. In addition to handing out extremely thorough information sheets and consent forms, I also made the effort to talk about the sheets with guardians and the teenagers themselves. Before each focus group session, I reminded each group about the code of confidentiality; to refrain from talking about overly personal matters which are unrelated to the discussion or reveal personal details about other people not involved in the focus group which are sensitive and personal. I made sure to collect all consent forms before proceeding with each focus group. Participants were told that they could withdraw any time before the focus group sessions.

Interview setting

I conducted two of my focus groups at Howick Library in the Howick Room, and one focus group at Tupu Youth Library in the Meeting Room. All the sessions were held during branch opening hours. The library branches were an excellent venue for the interviews as many of the participants were familiar with the surroundings but the rooms we used ensured privacy. All the sessions were audio-recorded. Interviews were held between 22nd October and 1 November, 2012. It was essential to create a friendly, laidback atmosphere for my participants – I seated us in a circle, usually with a table in the middle, with a bowl of wrapped candy which I invited them to help themselves to throughout the course of the interview. Participants were asked to wear nametags – as I wanted to be able to a) identity everyone easily and b) use their names during the discussion as it would make it feel more personal. I opened every focus group by reiterating the goals of my research and encouraging the participants to be candid, frank and honest. I also reminded the participants to be respectful of one another and remind them about basic focus group etiquette: one could feel free to jump in and answer a question or follow on a comment as long as there were no interruptions. To break the ice, I would then go around the circle and ask each participant to say 4 things: their name, age, what genre and format of books they like to read best.

Establishing rapport with the participants

Establishing rapport with my participants was something Ooi (2008) mentioned in her report; she was referring to it in the context of one-on-one interviewing, however I think it is also essential to establish rapport in focus groups, particularly if certain teenagers may suddenly feel self-conscious in front of their peers. As I mentioned previously, my job has been especially advantageous during the recruitment process. The teenagers who were keen to be part of the project, and the guardians who were more than happy to let the teenager in their care be part of the project, happened to be people I had established a rapport with. My age has also been an advantage. As a 24 year old, I am also technically still a young adult so I found it very easy to relate to the topics and examples that were brought up by the participants, and in turn, I could sense that they could also find it easy to relate to me as individuals and as part of the group. This also helped me to prompt further with spontaneous questions. I also made sure that I could

achieve a good balance of leading the discussion but also maintaining a neutral disposition. As Aronson (2000) says, the main thing to remember when talking to teenager readers is not to enforce one's own opinions on what they *should* be reading.

3.6 Methods of data analysis

My analysis techniques were based on the methods of qualitative data analysis, mainly those outlined by Bryman (2008), Olson (2011), Stake (2011) and Packer (2011).

Before I set out to conduct the actual focus groups, I devised a system of codes which helped me organize all the paperwork, rough transcripts and notes (Bryman, 2008; Stake, 2011). My initial code categories were quite general: 'Web 2.0' (with the 'internet' and 'social media' as a subcategories), 'influential people', 'pop culture' (with 'hype' as a subcategory), 'public libraries', 'information-seeking behaviour' and 'physical features of books'. After my first focus group, I added 'Wikipedia' as another subcategory of 'Web 2.0', as it proved a very popular source. I also added 'film' as a subcategory of 'pop culture'. By the last focus group, I had picked up new code categories and code subcategories such as 'manga and graphic novels', 'book covers', 'series', 'artwork' and 'feelings towards Facebook/Tumblr/Twitter' and so on.

As Bryman (2008) suggests, I listened to each of the three recordings three times first just to sort out my codes and to become really familiar with the voices and speech patterns of the participants. I then listened to each recording a few more times to code concepts, ideas and quotes. I did not transcribe any of the focus groups, properly – but focussed on listening to the tracks intently (a lot of stop/starts), taking down quotes, as well as making additional notes about extra observations, for example, noting that a number of the participants agreed when one participant voiced his hesitance about 'liking' the library Facebook page. I then combined all the codes and notes from the individual recordings together in order to "outline connections between concepts and categories" (Bryman, 2008, p. 552) within the material. Another concept I used is narrative analysis, in particular interactional narrative analysis, as I was not only interested in what is *said,* but also, the way the young adults will communicate with one another through the duration of the focus group session (Bryman, 2008; Stake, 2010). Textual reflection and thematic analysis were almost as a second round of coding, as Olson (2011) describes the process, to lift further strands of similarities and differences from the data collected. As Olson (2011) suggests, maintaining as much detail in the coding as possible is important and this means even little details such as if the participant's voice drops or if slang is used.

3.8 Organisation and presentation of findings

I will present my findings in the next four chapters of this paper.

In Chapter 4, I revisit the basic research questions posed by two other research papers in this field by Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) and Swenor (2005): *why* and *how* are teenagers reading? A third question posed was *what,* but I will dedicate this question to Chapter 7.

In Chapter 5, I analyse the effects of peer influence, family influence, teacher and librarian influence. This follows on the research by Howard (2010), Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) and Fitzgerald (2009).

In Chapter 6, I apply my findings to an extended post Web 2.0 analysis and discussion, examining how Wikipedia, Facebook, television and radio, Tumblr, film and the hype caused by pop culture really influences teenagers in both negative and positive ways.

In Chapter 7, I look at the qualities of the books or book series, concluding my findings on *what* teenagers are reading and how the book itself, in its traditional paperback or hardcover format is still a main influence on teenagers.

I will compare data, opinions and examples from my literature review to verbatim comments from my focus groups and my observations. The intent is to uncover rich, interesting data within a stimulating discussion.

4. Why and How Teenagers Read – Inside and Outside the Public Library

In this chapter, I attempt to shed some light onto the reasons why teenagers are reading in the first place, and how they go about finding reading material for themselves. From her survey to teenagers, Fitzgerald (2006) concludes that libraries are the top choice for the majority of teenagers when it comes to finding reading material – and this was both through borrowing items but also purchasing things from the sale table. My analysis and findings will also address RQ1: "What traditional aspects and features (for e.g. book displays, details of the physical book) play a part in influencing the book selection choices of young adults? How do teenagers search/browse for materials both inside the library and online via the web catalogue?" and RQ2: "Which groups of people or individuals play a part in influencing the book selection choices of young adults? How are these relationships cultivated and how does the communication about the book selection take place? Friends, teachers, librarians and family are said to play a big part in book recommendation and suggestions, according to the literature. I am interested in the role of the public library and the strategies it has adopted or altered to encourage teenagers and their reading. I am also interested in the relationship between teenagers and librarians, be it their school librarians, local public library librarians, librarians from other organisations and so forth.

4.1 Escapism versus Facing the Reality

Why young adults read is not one of my main research questions, but nevertheless, it is an essential introductory glimpse into the context of their information searching behaviour. From this question, one may get some kind of an idea to the ways in which teens look for reading material and who they approach for suggestions. In this section, I reference the research of Fitzgerald (2009) as well as a recent article by Kennedy (2012) on the latest bestselling books for young adults and a blog post by Some Screaming Fan Girl (2010). There seems to be general

consensus that the genres of fantasy and science fiction, and their new subgenres such as paranormal and post-apocalyptic fiction, are the most popular choices amongst young adults. However, Fitzgerald (2009), reports from her own observations that teenagers also prefer books with a relationship-based plotline or a "coming-of-age" tale – aspects that relate to real life. How does the reality match up to these shared facts, and what does it tell us about the reading needs of teenagers? Certainly, fantasy and science fiction were extremely popular genres amongst those in my focus groups. Although, some other popular genres included historical fiction, historical fiction mixed with fantasy – "like Game of Thrones", Japanese Manga and "lawyer crime mysteries". The following excerpts present a range of things which teenagers have to say about their reasons for leisure reading:

> "I like to read to find out about things I like, like travel, or fashion, or relationships..." – Participant, 17.
> "...it's something to get lost in for awhile." – Participant, 16
> "I look for books that relate to my life...maybe the [ending] might be like my story, too." – Participant, 16.
> "I get some of the lines that I use in real life from books I read. Like [the term] 'so amaze!'"- Participant, 16.

Reading would seem to be part of an even bigger web of information acquisition for many of these teenagers. It is the way in which they can learn about how to make plans, set goals, how to behave and how to form relationships. It is the way they learn how to escape/dream/fantasize. Books in series is a topic I will be discussing on its own in Chapter 7, but what the comment above reflects is that series offer the readers some kind of extended double life – a fantasy that is sustained.

4.2 E-books versus 'normal' books

The subject of e-books is often associated with young adults and this in itself lends itself to the interpretation that the new breed of technology-hungry teenager must certainly be a major consumer of e-books. Lietzau & Helgren's (2011) paper on web technology in American libraries would infer that this is certainly true, but within the context of school libraries and academic libraries – not so much in the public library realm. Fitzgerald (2006), Selwyn (2009) and Moyer & Thiele (2011) have made similar observations: that whilst other web technologies and digital services have been popular amongst the teenagers and twenty-something group, when it comes to reading for leisure or pleasure, both groups remain indifferent when it comes to e-books as an option.

My research is not quantitative and referring to measurements of any sort would go against the grain of my research objectives. However it must be said that in all three of my focus groups, I observed that those who owned mobile devices were a minority and for the majority, the thought of using their mobile devices to read books was simply not a priority. The choice of terms was also interesting:

> "I like normal books, as opposed to reading online or e-books." – Participant, 17
> "I prefer normal books...they're easier to curl up with on the couch." – Participant, 16.
> "I like paper books. I can write in them and highlight them and fold the [pages]. – Participant, 16.
> "I like to collect books and put them on my shelf. So... normal books. For sure." – Participant, 16.
> "I don't like reading on my iPad. It's sort of cold...to [hold] at night, and not comfortable. So I like regular books. But I could see how it would be better to read eBooks when you go travelling." – Participant, 17.
> "I downloaded a copy of *Of Mice and of Men* onto my computer when we were studying it and there weren't enough copies of the actual book for everyone. But that's about it."

The choice of term 'normal' or 'regular' in reference to paperback or hardback books is especially interesting and must surely reflect that reading digital books is still not a popular concept for teenagers. To this group it would seem that e-books are a great backup – as reflected by that last quote. It would be interesting to see what slightly older teenagers or young adults in tertiary education, who presumably would have more experience using e-books for academic purposes, have to say.

4.3 The role of the public library

Both Cassell & Walther's (2006) and Corradini's (2006) articles are examples of some of the first pieces of research which promote young adult services in public libraries. There are differing perspectives on what young adult services consists of. Corradini (2006) suggests that aiding information searching behaviour, user education (in the form of guided tours, brochures, classes in the library), database training and simply understanding that teenagers *will* use the library as a hangout space. Cassell & Walther's (2006) piece is comparatively far more innovative, suggesting a concept which the modern public library systems, like Auckland Libraries, are trying to embrace: every library staff member on the ground needs to be comfortable working with young adults. Whilst user education and marketing digital resources are certainly worthy services, it is reassuring to see researchers and librarians such as Cassell and Walther (2006) who still advocate for the classic summer reading programs and reader's advisory for youth.

Whilst there are various theories that the modern 21st century library needs to be recognized as a type of learning centre or community space (Snowball, 2008; Cassell & Walther, 2006), it would be a shame to forget about books altogether. At this year's LIANZA conference in Palmerston North, Karen Schneider, both librarian and library visionary, made the comment that whilst books may not necessarily be the main marketable product any more, libraries should still find ways to bring their communities back to the books using creative strategies and means. The book, the enjoyment of reading and learning should still be cornerstone services in libraries.

These insightful comments shed some light on what teenagers have to say about the ways in which the public library has affected their book selection choices through various services and strategies:

"I don't really have any close relationships with any library staff members. I don't really like it when someone comes up to me the moment I step through the door...it's kinda weird." – Participant, 16.

"There was this one time when this older female librarian took me around the entire library. It took ages. I [didn't] really want to but I felt bad. We didn't find anything I liked." – Participant, 17.

"Displays are useful. If the library has one I'll look at it." Participant, 17.

"I hate it when they, like, don't listen to you. This old library staff member...I told her, like, what I was looking for. And it was epic fail. She just didn't get me. I haven't tried to talk to anyone at the desk since." – Participant, 17.

"I prefer my school librarian because I see her, like, way more. And she can keep the new books for me to look at, which the [public library librarian] can't." – Participant, 17.

"I'll notice eventually if I see lots and lots of posters about some book [the library] is promoting. Or if they're trying to tell us about some reading program or competition." – Participant, 17.

"My mum gets the librarian to recommend books and request them for me and my sister during the school holidays. Some of them...I would never touch. Some of them are okay." – Participant, 16.

"I just request books at home. The website's easy to use. [I come to the library] once a week to do a quick browse, pick up my requests. If I don't have to go the desk, I won't." – Participant, 17.

"There was this one display where the staff each recommended books, and wrote these reasons, like, why they liked each book. They had photos on the review slip [of the staff member], and it made it really personal and sorta cool. Like there was this staff member and I like the way she dressed and looked and she [seemed] cool, so I looked for the books she recommended." –Participant, 16.

"I use the website a lot...but I still prefer to actually come to the library, when I can, to see and touch the books." – Participant, 17.

"I'll take [a recommendation] from a staff member if I'm familiar with them." – Participant, 18.

"[Book recommendations] depend on the staff member. You need to have a close relationship with them. They'll know what you like. But if you don't like [what they recommend], you know you can be straight up and tell them, too. And it's not awkward." – Participant, 18.

As one can see, familiar relationships with staff seems to matter significantly to teenagers ranging from a relationship of mutual respect to a relationship much more personal where book recommendations take place. Traditional aspects such as book displays, posters and the website seem to also make an impact on the way teenagers select material for themselves and the way they use the library. Interestingly, unless prompted, not one teenager brought up their library's Facebook page, Twitter page or social media efforts.

4.4 Search/Browse methods

With the recent focus on public libraries as being social spaces, learning areas (with a focus on technology and Wi-Fi) in combination with the trend of Web 2.0, it is easy to forget that the library is still a place where the physical process of searching and browsing, whether on the library floor itself, on the OPACS, or at home on the library catalogue, takes place, particularly amongst the teenagers. The comments below would indicate that the teenagers are still searching and browsing for books for pleasure using library tools:

"I'll go to my favourite shelf, then I do a random, walkabout thing, then I look at the displays..." –Participant, 17.

"I go at least once or twice a week to browse or put something on hold[1]. I mainly find that I'm having to put heaps of books on hold these days and wait out those LONG waiting lists." –Participant, 18.

"I first learnt how to use the catalogue by using it for research to look for stuff I needed for my homework. So like, non-fiction things. Then through that, I learnt how to look things up, for my casual [reading]. I know how to look things up according to genre, according to the author. I like the stickers.[2] Then I just request, request, request." – Participant, 17.

" ...I always go back to the shelf where my favourite books usually are and like, by fate, maybe I'll find something close by." –Participant, 18.

"I go to the library once a fortnight to browse. I'll search for something like if it's a series I'm keeping tabs on and I want to know if they library has it yet." –Participant, 17.

"There used to be coloured stickers on the spine label. I figured 'blue' was historical so I used to try look out for those." – Participant, 17.

"If I know what I'm looking for, I know I'll very rarely find it on the shelf – because of your new system.[3]...It was a bit frustrating at first, but then the staff taught me how to request stuff and I'm all good. I browse when I'm trying to find something new." – Participant, 18.

"I wish the library displays [had more] colour. I like book store displays." –Participant, 17.

"I do my little random thing. I'll look at the adult fiction section or the teen fiction section. Then from like A to Z, I'll randomly pull out books that look interesting. It's all about the colour of the cover, the font, the images on the front, at this point. If it looks good, then I may read the back or the blurb thing. If it sounds 'me', I'll take it." – Participant, 18.

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[1] Placing a request on an item. This occurs when the item is available but not necessarily at that particular branch and will need to be transferred. Or, if the item is unavailable as all copies are checked out and there is possibly a waiting list.

[2] Some legacy systems in Auckland Libraries used different stickers to classify their fiction into different genres

[3] Participant is referring to the 'floating' system amongst our RFID-tagged fiction collection in Auckland Libraries. Books will stay in the location which they are returned to, unless there is a hold on it.

The last comment was perhaps the most interesting of all, because as a browser, I could definitely relate to this strategy. Interestingly, to note, several of the participants in this focus group also openly admitted to doing the same thing. When I brought up this example at the two following focus groups, there were also verbal agreements like "I do that too, oh my gosh!" What was also interesting is that those who agreed to doing the same thing were all surprised that there were others out there who shared 'their' "random" strategy. What we may interpret from this subtext is that most teenagers seem to approach their personal reading from a very individual point of view; they may talk about books and recommend them to one another, but they may not necessarily look for books together. It is still an individual process. In both of Ooi's papers on this topic of information searching behaviour amongst adults (2008, 2011), Ooi also deduces that this random approach, which takes stamina and time, was also popular amongst her own recruits. So it is refreshing to observe that young adults and adults may not be so different, after all. Public libraries may wish to take note on the comments made about stickers and classification scehemes. The discussion on the physical aspects of books will pick up in Chapter 7.

5. The Influence of Personal Networks on Teen Book Selection

In this chapter, I will be addressing RQ1: "What traditional aspects and features (for e.g. book displays, details of the physical book) play a part in influencing the book selection choices of young adults? How do teenagers search/browse for materials both inside the library and online via the web catalogue?" With the rich data I have collected and analysed, I am interested in shedding light on how peer influence, family influence, teacher and librarian influence (though this has already been discussed in *4.3 The role of the public library*), as well other human influences affects book selection. Are these influences positive or negative? I am interested in how these relationships are formed. Also, what are the similarities and differences between these different relationships on book selection? I am interested in how all these different influences create effect simultaneously in a young person's reading life, and how their own individual choices emerge.

5.1 Peer Influence

Swenor's (2005) quantitative research reflects that young adults rate their parents and teachers as being the two groups which encourage them to read the most, with friends and librarians being rated far lower in comparison. Whereas Maynard, Mackay, & Smyth's (2008) research, which uses a mixed methods approach, reports that friends are the biggest human influence in book selection amongst the younger teenagers and older teenagers. A possible reason for these two differing viewpoints lies in the definition of 'peer'. In her interviews with young adults, Fitzgerald (2006) observes that when posed with the word 'peer', many teenager assume that this means their intimate circle of close friends, but as they begin to talk about who influences their music, fashion, what they read, the films they watch, the peer group they refer to include their physical observations of what other people their age are doing or what it is reported that their peers are doing through magazine articles and the internet. Howard (2010), who has created her own 'taxonomy of teen readers', observes that for everyday reading, teenagers are usually more

independent in their choices and like the traditional strategy of going into bookstores and the libraries to select books, although if it is perceived that their peers are reading a particular book and if there is enough hype about it by those their age through the radio, television or the internet, these factors will often persuade the individual to check it out. These observations would then imply that today's teenagers are deeply aware of what other teenagers their age (in their local community, but also in the web community) are interested in and the web has made this peer influence even more prevalent. The comments below would indicate what teenagers would define as peer influence, and what effects peer influence would have on their book selection:

> "I don't care that much about what [my friends] say on Facebook [about books], but if I like a book series, I'll 'like' it on Facebook because I know that other people will 'like' it, too. Then I'll post things on the wall and see what [other people] say. We start these long-as conversations with, like 60, people, about books we like. That's how I found out about 'The Perks of Being a Wallflower". Then I went and told all my mates at school." – Participant, 17.
>
> "With the Hunger Games, it started with 2 friends finding out about it through Tumblr, then they made everyone in our circle read it. Then we told everyone else. We thought we like discovered this great book until the articles about it in Dolly and Girlfriend magazine came out about it and by then everyone we knew were reading it. – Participant, 15.
>
> "I like to look at the requested books and see what are the most popular books. You couldn't miss the Twilight books. They were so thick and there were always like 20 copies on the request shelf, so I thought – I have to try this." –Participant, 18.
>
> "My friends don't really read, unless it's something really, really popular and all the kids at school are reading it"- Participant, 15.
>
> "[Talking about books] happens randomly, like during lunch-break or something. I have one friend who's totally obsessed about a book and she'll talk about the characters like they're real. And it catches on because you want to read it to know what she means. One of my other friends loved this book so much, that even though she doesn't drive, she made her dad drive her to my place to personally deliver the book to me. I couldn't not read it after that. And I really liked it." –Participant, 16.

"[My friends and I] can't stand waiting in the lists at the library so it makes sense to buy a series together and just pass the books around. And because we do that, we can't help but talk about the same books all the time." – Participant, 16.

"It depends who the friend is. And it depends...how many people are reading it? If too many people are reading it, I'll be like 'stuff it'. I'm sure there'll be a movie." – Participant, 16.

"I'll read it if a few people I know are reading it but if it's something everyone won't stop talking about, and it's over-hyped, I refuse to read it. There's nothing worse than a [hyped book], because it usually ends up being really bad. Or, I think it'll be so good, but then it'll be disappointing. Like the Hunger Games." –Participant, 16.

From the comments above, it would appear that peer influence, be it peers that one knows personally, or the perception of what peers in other countries, other communities are doing – informed by the media and the internet. The process tends to be a combination – one or two friends finding out about books through online blogs, magazine articles, the radio, and then physically telling their friends about it. The last 2 comments were interesting as it reflects how peer influence and over-marketed books are two closely related influences. There seems to be a fine line between extremely popular books and hyped books or fan fiction and the way in which teenagers respond differently to these books would diffuse the opinions about peer pressure. There seems to be a reluctance to buy into over-marketed books, proving that individualism is still cherished amongst some teenagers.

5.2 Family Influence, Teacher Influence, Librarian Influence

Within the last 14 years, there have been two schools of research and opinion about the effects teachers, parents and librarians have on teenagers and book selection. This tends to depend on which side of the 14 years the research was published. Aaronson's research, from the early 2000s, would carry the traditional viewpoint: that books, much like aspects of popular culture, are a sore point of contention between parent and teenager, that parents only push reading for academic reasons, rather than reading for pleasure, that parents and teenagers read completely different books (Aaronson, 2000). Marra & Witteveen's paper, published in 2005, which analyses teen reading surveys from 2001-2003, makes a similar observation when evaluating what Dylan, one of the interviewees, had to say about reading; his parents and teachers could not understand that Dylan was ingesting information through other forms like the internet and television rather than through books. Comments about such examples were rare in my focus groups, though there was one participant who said:

> "My parents don't care much for fiction. They say it's a waste of time. I like fantasy. My dad says I can read whatever I like – after I finish my advanced calc homework." – Participant, 17

However, since 2005, the research on youth and their information seeking behaviour seems to have embarked on a revised focus: that parents, teachers, librarians, as older influences on our teenagers, have more profound influence on what teenagers are reading than previously assumed. Mackay, Maynard & Smyth's 2008 study on what and how young people are selecting and borrowing books and it is pleasing to note how many subgroups of human influence the researchers thought to include. Like this research, Agosto (2012) has also taken the time to uncover the more personal ways in which parents, teachers and librarians have connected with teenagers, through personal interaction, or social media, to influence teenagers. Several of the comments from participants would certainly contribute to this revised observation. It was also pleasing to see dads being referenced as reading buddies:

"My dad and I read different things but he was the one who took me to the library and taught me how to find books, how to request them. He often gets me to try out new genres, like medieval mysteries." Participant, 17.

"My mom and I like to debate about books. Like she'll say – aw, this was such a cr** book, and that makes me want to read it, and argue that it's actually quite deep or something." Participant, 18.

"In my family, it's just us girls, so there's always a nice magazine, some chick-lit book or a really good book lying around to read. My mum, me and my sisters love trading really funny chick-lit and then talking about boys, relationships and stuff." Participant, 17

Comments like these point to examples of parent-child bonding over the love of reading and the interactions over books and book selection can be likened to the previous examples about peer influence. Likewise with the comments from participants about their relationships with their teachers and school/public library librarians, it was pleasing to see that there are teachers and librarians who are striving to promote the pleasure and love of reading peripherally, who can view literature beyond the two categories of 'classics' and 'junk'.

"Jade[4] picks out all my books for me. She often requests them for me and puts them aside. I won't like all of them, but I like most of them. We catch up at least once a week on her desk shift to chat about the books. She likes to hear why I don't like a particular book." Participant, 15.

"[my teacher] often makes up three lists of books for me when I ask her for ideas: books I should read which will help me with my coursework, books I should read just for pleasure, and finally, the third list will be books that cover both categories."

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[4] A staff member at the local public library. Name has been changed for privacy.

6. Social Media and Mass Media Efforts: the Reality

The myriad of Web 2.0 research in the context of libraries currently out there would certainly tout social media and mass media as being the most effective tools out there today in engaging with the new generation of young adults. We should accept that social media and mass media are huge influences in the average teenager's life – and the comments shared by the participants in my focus groups would certainly confirm this – but is it right to then assume that they will turn to the same sources as part of their book selection process, or that library Facebook pages or blogs about books have sufficient visibility within this transient, ever-changing, immense space? This chapter will focus on answering RQ2: *"How are young adults influenced by social media when it comes to personal book selection? What particular aspects of social media (i.e. the type of forum, the interface, the interaction, etc) applications encourage book selection suggestions, interaction, discussion – and why?"* on the connections teenagers have made between social media and their book selection process and information. The specific social media efforts that will be focused on are Facebook and blogs such as Tumblr. In terms of mass media, we will be looking at television, radio and film – in particular the relationships between fan fiction and films. We will also be looking at Wikipedia – which I had never intended to examine at all. However, when I realized the huge emphasis that was placed on it by the teenagers in my first focus group in their book selection and influence process, I altered my prepared questions for the remaining two focus groups. Wikipedia, in its own way, is a form of social media, conjured from a collaborative editing process, and its appeal to young adults is both interesting and alarming.

6.1 Facebook, Blogs, Emails – the Teen Perspective

Auckland Libraries is currently the sole public library system in Auckland, and all the participants in my focus groups have Auckland Libraries library cards. No one was surprised to hear that Auckland Libraries had its own Facebook page, a blog and an option for RSS feeds on reading lists.

"Who doesn't?" –Participant, 18.

When asked if anyone had 'liked' the page, or used it as a reference point, or forum for discussion about books, there were only perplexed responses. Nearly every single kind of library system will most probably have a social media page and blog of some kind, but little research has been conducted to calculate the actual effectiveness of these endeavours. Lietzau & Helgren's (2011) report on the web presence of various public and private library systems in the US reflects careful calculations of the increased efforts made by libraries to join the realm of social media and have also tried to link this to the increase of library visits per capita, not taking into account other efforts such as increased programs, new technology, re-thinking the library's space, and newer materials which may have also played just as big a role. What is interesting is that the lack of actual interaction on these social media pages is justified with the consolation that people are simply not aware of the library's Facebook page or blog, and the instruction for frontline staff to promote it at all costs. The comments below would suggest that a sample of teenagers are very much aware about these efforts, but have such views of their own:

> "Of course [Auckland Libraries] has a Facebook page. I would expect them to. But it's not like I'll go out of my way to look for them." –Participant, 17.
> "The thing is this ... who is the person on the other side of the page? Maybe it's some old man, who's kind of weird. Library staff are always weird, no offense. I'd like to know who I'm getting advice from." –Participant, 17.
> "Who makes up those reading lists anyway? And no offense, but, why would I listen to him or her specifically?" –Participant, 16.
> "I unsubscribed to those RSS feeds and the mailing list ages ago because it was kind of impersonal. If I didn't like any of the books on that month's list, it's not like I can email back and say 'what else have you got?'" –Participant, 16
> "It's not just about who's running the page. Who is commenting on it? I've gone on the page. No one interesting was commenting on anything. Just moms asking about what time the children's programs were. So I didn't bother liking the page." –Participant, 18.
> "I ended up liking a page by some random public library in Colorado – they had this full-on hilarious conversation with more than 300 comments about 50 Shades of Grey. One of

my mates re-shared it on her wall. I will 'like' a page if I feel like something interesting like that will come up again. I want to start a wall-rant[5] on The Perks of Being A Wallflower" –Participant, 18.

"My friends and I will have wall-rants on each others' pages about books- especially when we share reviews from The Guardian, or spoof videos about certain books. But I won't go out of my way to see what other people are doing." –Participant, 17.

What we can deduce, then, is that Facebook is most certainly used as a medium where young adults will discuss reading material, which may then possibly influence their book selection. But personal networks still have precedence over simply searching for random pages. Those who are hesitant to 'like' the library's page seem to be somewhat concerned about the anonymous librarian behind it, or that they may be then be bothered by posts which have little to do with their interests. Maybe library systems just need to refine their social media plans and policies. The comment by one participant below was met with much agreement during our focus group:

"I'd like to see certain staff members I know on the Facebook page itself. Like, if the page becomes more personal. I know who'll respond [when] I leave a question or comment on the page." – Participant, 17.

It was disappointing that Twitter was not mentioned voluntarily, and when probed, similar reasoning to the Facebook questions were given. I was surprised to hear about Tumblr's influence.

"I like to use Tumblr to catch up on my favourite bands and see what the cast of Gossip Girls are wearing. While I was on it, I kept seeing all these [screenshots] from The Perks of Being a Wallflower with quotes from the book, which was being made into a film. I just kept seeing it everywhere so when I found out it was a book, I went and got a copy of it, and then I told all my friends about it. I reposted one of the blogs on my Facebook wall."

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[5] Refers to a social media situation where a status inspires a series of various comments.

Based on this comment, I thought to ask more about about Tumblr in another focus group, one participant also agreed that she found out a lot about film and books through this forum, and even gave some insight as to why:

> "Tumblr's the best. It's very visual. Tumblr introduced me to Game of Thrones. The quotes they pick from the books are always so mean and the images they use from the TV show, combined with the quotes just make you want to read the book."

It was disappointing that no other blogs were mentioned and when probed, no one could think of other instances where library blog had appealed. Hill commented in her 2010 article that teenagers have a multi-tasking information searching behavior where several websites, on several devices might be used at a time. If this is the case, it is easy to see the appeal of images which are visual and stand out.

6.2 Television and Radio

Being in the young adult group myself, I predicted that television and radio would probably not be as influential as some of the other media influences in this chapter, particularly in regards to this age group. Indeed, during the focus groups, if I probed toward the direction of these two examples, I'd be asked for examples. Together with one of the focus groups, we concluded that the only examples to be had were the occasional Warehouse[6], Whitcoulls[7] or Paper Plus[8] television or radio ads about bestseller books. In recent years, fan fiction series such as Twilight and 50 Shades of Grey, have been talked about on several popular radio stations here in New Zealand as reported by the participants in the focus groups. Rather than just hearing the

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[6] http://www.thewarehouse.co.nz/red/

[7] http://www.whitcoulls.co.nz/

[8] http://www.paperplus.co.nz/

traditional ads, radio discussions, or 'rants', which are provocative and humorous do wonders in persuading teens to read:

> "Mai FM called '50 Shades' a rude book...that made me want to read it even more!" – Participant, 18.

It would appear that television today works in a more straightforward way when it comes to book selection influence. In the past few years, the slew of new young adult based television shows which are based on young adult novels, have often persuaded many teenagers to seek out the books for themselves.

> "I don't get to visit the public library as much or do any research on books. But I always make time for TV – because I can watch TV and study. I can just MySky[9] stuff and watch it in one go on a weekend night. If I find out a TV series I'm crazy about originated from a book series, it just makes sense to go read that – at least I've got the background info already." –Participant, 17.

6.3 Books to Movies...and Wikipedia

This may seem like a strange title to give a segment within this chapter, however the data gleaned from the focus groups around these three sources of information turned out to be incredibly rich, from all three groups. In my first literature review, my background research on information searching behaviour amongst young adults led me to several pieces about Wikipedia (Gyllstrom & Moens, 2012; Selwyn, 2009), mainly about Wikipedia being the one-stop-shop for information amongst this younger generation. It was always during the point in discussion about the relationship between books and films that the topic of Wikipedia would arise, proving just how much multi-tasking really goes on.

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[9] Record live television

As with the examples in the previous segment about the relationship between television shows and young adult novels, the phenomenon of turning young adult books (especially fan fiction) into film has had various effects and influences on our participants:

> "NO NO NO NO. I hate hyped books. And anyway, if I know there'll be a movie, why bother reading the book?" –Participant, 17.
>
> "I always tend to think the books are better than the film, but everyone would say that. If I can, I'll try to read the book first. I'll read in a magazine about the film, and how it was first a book, then I'll race out and get a copy, so I can then critique the film." – Participant, 18.

In my first focus group, one participant confessed:

> "I was sitting through The Vow and loved it, and kept raving on about it for weeks until someone said – 'did you know it's a Nicholas Sparks book?', and I had no idea! So, now, when I'm watching a really good movie, whether at [home] or at the movies, I'm usually on my iPhone, on Wikipedia, trying to find out all I can about the movie, whether it's a real life story, if there's a book or like a bio or something, then I'm opening up the public library catalogue to see if they have it, or I go on Amazon and see if I can get it for my Kindle account..." –Participant, 17.

When I probed further and asked,
"So you're on your iPhone, iPad, or mobile device inside the movie theatres, doing all this?"
Other participants jumped in and agreed that they were behaving in the same manner. There is the perception that it is now necessary to not just read the book, so that they will have an honest idea of a film, but that Wikipedia is necessary to explain the intricacies such as 'character traits', 'plot summaries', 'recurring themes', so that when the film is actually being watched, one will be well-informed enough to just enjoy it:

> "I Wikipedia every movie before I go and see it. IF I go and see it. If Rotten Tomatoes gives it a cr** review and score below like 60%, I won't bother watching it. Might read the book though..."

> "I had to keep Wikipedia open through all the Lord of the Rings movies, not gonna lie. It was the only way I could remember who all the characters were...there were too many Sara-this and Sara-that."

It was quite common at this point for the conversations to revolve around the delights of Wikipedia and often I had to steer us back onto the topic of book selection. Back to the concept of being "well informed enough", this seemed to be of some great concern to several participants – and as I suspected, due to the academic skills they are exposed to in English Literature and Film/Media studies. This is interesting, and somewhat enlightening, to see how the academic process has influenced book selection process.

> "Before I start reading any book, I'll look it up in Wikipedia. Yes, yes, it spoils the plot for me, which sometimes su**s, but often they give you a list of themes to look out for. I don't want to miss a thing! I'd feel ... blind if I started reading a book from scratch." – Participant, 18.
>
> "I was reading this one book where the narrator of the story is supposed to have Asperger's Syndrome. And I'm so glad two pages in, I Wikipedia'd the plotline because the way it was written was really starting to confuse me and reading the plotline convinced me to keep going." –Participant, 17.

It was also interesting to note that Wikipedia is the answer when it comes to looking up author-specific information, or ideas of what to read next, over Facebook, reader's advisory websites or even the author's websites. And to be fair, the public library catalogues I have looked at do not keep as a track on author publications as they should:

> "If I like a specific author, Wikipedia is the first place I go to, to see what else he or she has written. And I'll keep religiously checking it if I know another instalment is out soon. And I like reading interviews with the author – the links are usually there on the page. – Participant, 16.

"I like going to the other tagged keywords at the bottom. So I can check out what other 'Novels set in San Francisco' there are out there. Yeah...I've just finished On the Road."
–Participant, 16.

7. Qualities of the Physical Book

In this chapter, I will explore RQ3 "What traditional aspects and features (for e.g. book displays, details of the physical book) play a part in influencing the book selection choices of young adults? How do teenagers search/browse for materials both inside the library and online via the web catalogue?" The most interesting and rich data arose during discussion about the physical qualities about books themselves, and this was in the context of browsing through the library shelves. It was pleasing to follow on from the concrete research of Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008), and further explore the ways in which the physical book itself and traditional act of physically browsing the library or even a bookstore, influences our young people today in their book selection. These days, library OPACs are also helpful aids in replicating or informing viewers of the physical qualities about books, so I also included this tool in my questioning. This chapter will focus on these specific traits: the Title and the Cover, the commitment to a series or characters, commitment to an author, recommendations as well as the way books are branded. I will compare comments from my participants to discussion from blogs by other young adults, authors, publishing companies and journals on these issues.

7.1 The Title and the Cover

Publishing houses would be grateful to know that at least from my sample of participants, the book title and book cover still play massive roles in book selection. The discussions in focus groups helped me to gain insight into what indicators young adults are looking for in both the title and cover. Amongst some of the participants, the Title was not so much an indicator that a book should be borrowed, but more an indicator that it should not:

> "If the title has 'fangs', 'wolf', 'blood' in it – it's a no. Immediately." –Participant, 16.
> "I've sort of observed that the latest trend is to take classics like Romeo and Juliet or Jane Eyre and jazz the titles up a bit, indicating that the storylines are similar, but cooler or

something. I don't know how I feel about it. It feels a bit patronizing. Like they don't think I'm capable of actually reading a classic – or wanting to." –Participant, 18.

"I picture myself being able to tell someone what I'm reading. Could I say "Desert Moon Love" or something without like, being completely mortified? Yeah... . " –Participant, 18.

As observed and analysed on the previous chapter of this project, we have established that teenagers are incredibly visual, and incredibly aware of how visual-orientated their own cohorts are as well. At present there seems to be two main theories or opinions: a) there is fine line between artistic and creative covers, and , going far too over the top and b) the less cover art, the better (Guest Blogger – YALSA's The Hub, 2012; De la pena, 2012; Abrams, 2012).

Participants who fell under opinion a) tended to also be graphic novel readers, and therefore, more interested in the artwork that goes with books. As with the comment made above about being able to share the title of the book one is reading with others, another participant made a similar comment:

> "I put all my schoolbooks in my schoolbag, but if the cover art of a book I've borrowed is mean, I'll carry the book around sort of, like, in my hand. I want people to see it and ask what I'm reading. That's often how I get ideas of what to read next– I'll see someone else carrying around a cool looking book." –Participant, 17.
>
> "Graphic novels are all about the cover art and all about the art work." –Participant, 18.

Besides status, it would appear that book covers make the browsing process a lot easier especially for today's teenagers who are bombarded with many other distractions and information. Book covers indicate how old a book is and how current or relevant the plotline may be:

> "If I don't have all the time in the world, but I know for sure that I'm sort of just looking for a kind of fantasy/sweet romance kind of book, I just look for covers with like a boy and a girl on it, usually like they're facing opposite ways, looking out into the distance.

Do you know what I mean?" –Participant, 16. (Participant's comment was met with agreement by several other participants)

"I feel like I've graduated from the typical kind of young adult, teen book. So I'm trying really hard to look for more serious covers. Simple covers look more grown-up - like Penguin covers. If I see one of those covers, I'll usually be persuaded to look at the book blurb." –Participant, 17.

"I look for worn covers. Best way to see how popular a book is." –Participant, 17.

"You know what I would never touch? Those old books that actually have book jackets. I thought they were getting rid of that? They make it so annoying to read with. And if they're plastic? Aaaarrgh." –Participant, 18 (Participant's comment was met with agreement by several other participants).

7.2 Series and Characters

Both Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) and Swenor (2006) have uncovered the presence of a commitment by teenagers to the books they read, namely, commitments to characters, and commitment to following out a series. These were two aspects which I was keen to explore in the focus groups, especially the reasoning and context behind these attachments. One of the reasons for reading, given by all types of people regardless of age, is 'escapism' and it is pleasing to see from the sample I observed that teenagers are still finding pleasure from getting lost in a book. A trait I observed was the lengths teens would go to, to prolong the experience of escape, or, to at least keep it as consistent as possible:

"I have two worlds – the real world, and then the world that I go into when I'm reading a good book. I try to find the fattest book possible – that way I know it'll last longer." – Participant, 17.

"When I do my browsing thing, I look for series on the shelf – you know- the spine labels are all the same and stuff, anyway, I always get excited when I see a new series!" – Participant, 17

(At this point, a friend of the participant interrupts -)

"You're so unfaithful with your series!" – Participant, 18

"I know, I know – I'm promiscuous with my series. I'll read 2 at the same time, 'cause the books only dribble out like one per year, so I need two series to get me through. And if I know a series if coming to an end for sure, I'll start hunting for a replacement series!" –Participant, 17.

"You know, I started this series when I was in Year 6 – and they finally published the last book this year....That's half my life!" –Participant, 18.

"It's the series books that people get the most obsessed with – it takes up years of your life, and it's the series books that my friends and I tend to share with one another and we share this world together." –Participant, 17.

What I observed was that despite the analysis by Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008) which assumes that the draw-card of a series is the pure fact that it keeps going and prolongs adventure and fantasy, even in their reading world, teenagers are still deeply aware of how they would like this world to be constructed. If the plotline in a series starts to meet a dead-end,

"Like with that [Tomorrow] series it felt like it was going nowhere and I spent more time feeling frustrated than relaxed. So I ditched it." –Participant, 17.

Commitment to characters, and complex plot-twists and turning-points, being "entertained", is still an objective:

"I will never get bored of Game of Thrones. George M. Martin keeps you on your toes. You start to fall in love with a main character, and then he just writes him out, leaving you like WHAT? It makes me want to go back for more. I'll spend the rest of the year reading it again and again to see if there was any foreshadowing that could have possibly prepared me for this..." –Participant, 17.

"I live out my fantasies through these characters – they inspire the way I dress and just who I am." –Participant, 16.

"I have got to be the most boring teenager out there. I do the school thing, I'm on the debating team and I play cello, and I know what I want to do at uni. It's not a bad thing – I think I'm just not bad-a** or rebellious because I sort of curb all these feelings gently by reading my books and cheering on characters when they make good decisions and then [I feel] sad at school all day when it doesn't work out. It's therapeutic." –Participant, 18.

7.3 The Author Recommendations and Associations

Author recommendations and the branding of books are two aspects which I had not been able to find much research on during my literature review process. Once again, as with several of my other observations, both these two aspects arose in my second focus group, and so I probed further in my last focus group. Commitment to authors – not just to their work, but their recommendation of the work of their peers – was also another observation I made, re-emphasizing just how aware teenagers are of the literary world. Teenagers are not just intrigued and entranced with the world of their characters, likening them to celebrities, the lives of beloved authors are also closely speculated:

"I added Suzanne Collins on Facebook – I feel so much more connected to her books. The other day, I was looking through the New Books stand at the library, and when I saw a review Suzanne Collins had made of the book on the cover, I got it out." –Participant, 17.

It has occurred that we live in a world now where people are just as informed about the authors of their books and the books themselves. We can converse with the authors themselves through

social media, we know the entire family background of our authors. Authors are also more connected to other authors in a public sense.

> "I heard on the internet that Meg Cabot and Stephenie Meyers[10] are really good friends. It just feels right to get all their books. You wouldn't get one friend's book and not the other. That's a bit mean." –Participant, 17.
>
> "I saw Jennifer Ashley leave a comment on Kim Harrison's Facebook page[11] and I got so excited!" –Participant, 15.

This awareness of the fact that teenagers do seem to take the reader's advisory by other authors seriously should be a tool considered by the public libraries – author displays, author visits (if, and when possible), and becoming familiar with authors themselves in the mass media and social media.

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[10] Names of two authors
[11] Names of two authors

8. Conclusion

8.1 Concluding Remarks

From the focus groups and close analysis of the shared information, I have attempted to uncover as much rich and inspiring data as possible. Following the schools of theory on qualitative analysis, interpretation and reporting given by such researchers as Paton (2002) and Packer (2011), I have tried to group and present honest data when possible during my analysis, in order to preserve the frankness and freshness of the discussions.

Talking about Web 2.0 with actual teenagers affirmed my initial desire to include a post Web 2.0 discussion in this paper, in the context of teenagers as users, curators and the audience of this phenomenon, one can see that there is a distinct way in which teenagers choose to use it as tool, and to influence their book selection. Perhaps public libraries or any other type or library which is pursuing the social media route, should read this paper for idea on efficiently reaching out to the younger generation.

Personal networks, such as friends, family, teachers and local librarians, still remain close influence to several of those in my sample, and it was interesting to hear of participants talk about their choices to follow the crowd...or simply make individual decisions about their book selection: we should be less quick to underestimate teenagers and their ability to make individual choices. One thing for libraries to consider is how to get teenagers to include them in their own personal social media or blogging networks; to remember that the power of personal relationships is still especially important for teenagers, no matter how they may present themselves.

All things considered, it must be pointed out that my research was carried out with a rather small sample of 29 teenagers, and thus this project can only offer some perspectives and points of view from a small percentage of this cast and complex group.

8.2 Suggestions for Future Research

My research has attempted to provide a more in-depth, personal study of the ways in which young adults search for information and select fiction for themselves. There is certainly scope to explore this topic much further and below are a few suggestions:

Conduct a study where young adults may be sorted into more defined age-groups
Other researchers who have interviewed or surveyed the young adult group such as Maynard, Mackay & Smyth (2008), Agosto (2012), Fitzgerald, (2006, 2009) and Marra & Witteveen (2005) have had the privilege to reflect more data about their participants, as well as group them according to age, in their research. It would be interesting to compare the responses from the groups this way as the young adult group is an extremely complex group. It may be interesting to break the young adult group down into 3 groups: ages 12-14 years, 15-17 years, 18-24 years.

Conduct a study in a different geographic setting
My population sample was restricted to just Auckland city – I was fortunate to have participants from South Auckland and East Auckland, but everyone was a library card holder from the same public library system. I would be keen to see how young adults in a different part of New Zealand would respond. It would also be interesting to see if young adults in the UK or USA (the base of where a lot of fan fiction or cult fiction is written), who may have more opportunities to meet authors in person and attend book-related events such as Comic-Con or author books signings and parties, would have something extra to contribute.

Much work is to be done in order to be able to say that one has conducted a comprehensive and thorough study on this topic. It is hoped that my project has at least ignited a post Web 2.0 discussion in relation to teenagers and triggered deeper questions that should be asked.

Word count: 15 955 (including title and subheadings)

9. Appendices

Appendix A: Information Sheet for Participants

Participant Information Sheet for How Young Adult Readers select fiction in public libraries: a study

of the factors which influence information-seeking in context

Researcher: Rachel Randall: School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Master of Information Studies student at Victoria University of Wellington. As a part of this degree I am undertaking a research project. The project is an examination of the factors that influence young adults in their fiction selection in the public library. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participant, and this has been granted.

I am inviting young adults who are members of Auckland Libraries, ages 15 years to 19 years, to participate in this study. Each participant will be asked to attend a focus group at either the Howick Room in Howick Library (Monday 15 October 2012, 4pm/5pm) or the meeting room at Tupu Youth Library (Thursday 18 October, 2012, 4pm), where they will be joined by about 6-8 other participants and myself. As the investigator in this project, I will be facilitating these focus groups. I will ask a series of prepared questions about book selection and I may spontaneously probe further should the need arise or if the conversation leads to new topics. Participants will be asked to attend a focus group at a library which is their home branch and the sessions will be run during the branch's opening hours.

Each focus group session should last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. I will be providing refreshments during the course of the session. I will be recording each session in audio format.

Should any participants or guardians feel the need to withdraw from the project, they may do so without question before the event of the focus group session which he/she has agreed to attend on the _____

Responses collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an extremely confidential basis. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Philip Calvert, will have access to the raw material (the notes and recordings) collected from the focus groups. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally in the final report as participants will be identified only through code-names. The report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that the published report may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals or as a conference paper. Key staff members in the Auckland Libraries youth services development team will read my report to see if they may use it to improve the young adult programs, services and collections. Interview notes and recordings will be destroyed one year after the project's completion.

I understand that any information provided by the other participants in the focus group must be also kept confidential. **This is the participant code of confidentiality: any kind of information shared by any of the group members must remain anonymous as it has been shared in absolute confidence, to maintain the safety and privacy of each participant**

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me on my mobile, 021 101 5056, email address, randalrach@myvuw.ac.nz or my supervisor, Dr Philip Calvert, at the School of Information Management at Victoria University,
P O Box 600, Wellington, phone 04 463 6629, email: philip.calbert@vuw.ac.nz

Rachel Randall
Signed:

Appendix B: Information Sheet for Guardians

Guardian and Participant Information Sheet for How Young Adult Readers select fiction in public libraries: a study of the factors which influence information-seeking in context
Researcher: Rachel Randall: School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

To parent and caregivers, please take the time to discuss the goals of this research project with the teenager you are caring for. If you are happy to give consent for him/her to participate in the focus group session, please read and sign the attached consent form.

 I am a Master of Information Studies student at Victoria University of Wellington. As a part of this degree I am undertaking a research project. The project is an examination of the factors that influence young adults in their fiction selection in the public library. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants, and this has been granted.

I am inviting young adults who are members of Auckland Libraries, ages 15 years to 19 years, to participate in this study. Participants under the age of 16 require their guardians to understand the purposes of the project, discuss this with the teenager, and give their consent. Each participant will be asked to attend a focus group at either the Howick Room in Howick Library (Monday 15 October 2012, 4pm/5pm) or the meeting room at Tupu Youth Library (Thursday 18 October, 2012, 4pm), where they will be joined by about 6-8 other participants and myself. As the investigator in this project, I will be facilitating these focus groups. I will ask a series of prepared questions about book selection and I may spontaneously probe further should the need arise or if the conversation leads to new topics. Participants will be asked to attend a focus group at a library which is their home branch and the sessions will be run during the branch's opening hours.

Each focus group session should last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. I will be providing refreshments during the course of the session. I will be recording each session in audio format.

Should any participants or guardians feel the need to withdraw from the project, they may do so without question before the event of the focus group session which he/she has agreed to attend on the _____

Responses collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on
an extremely confidential basis. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person
besides me and my supervisor, Dr Philip Calvert, will have access to the raw material (the notes and recordings)collected from the focus groups. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally in the final report as participants will be identified only through code-names. The report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that the published report may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals or as a conference paper. Key staff members in the Auckland Libraries youth services development team will read my report to see if they may use it to improve the young adult programs, services and collections. Interview notes and recordings will be destroyed one year after the project's completion.

Please explain to the teenager in your care that any information provided by the other participants in the focus group must be also kept confidential. **This is the participant code of confidentiality: any kind of information shared by any of the group members must remain anonymous as it has been shared in absolute confidence, to maintain the safety and privacy of each participant**

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me on my mobile, 021 101 5056, email address, randalrach@myvuw.ac.nz or my supervisor, Dr Philip Calvert, at the School of Information Management at Victoria University,
P O Box 600, Wellington, phone 04 463 6629, email philip.calvert@vuw.ac.nz

Rachel Randall
Signed:

Appendix C: Consent Form for Participants

Victoria University of Wellington
Consent to Participation in Research

Title of Project: How Young Adult Readers select fiction in public libraries: a study of the factors which

influence information-seeking in context

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential **to the researcher and her supervisor. I am aware that the published report** will not use my name **and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me. I understand that any recordings of interviews will be electronically wiped, and any interview notes will be destroyed one year after the project's conclusion.**

I understand that the report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. I understand that this report may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Key staff members in the Auckland Libraries youth services development team will read the report to see if they may use it to improve the young adult programs, services and collections.

I am aware that I will receive a summary of the report itself, when it has been completed.

Name:
Signed:

Appendix D: Consent Form for Guardians

Guardian Consent to Participate Research

Title of Project: How Young Adult Readers select fiction in public libraries: a study of the factors which

influence information-seeking in context

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. The teenager in my care, and I, have discussed the goals and process of this project and I give consent for him/her to be involved in the focus groups.

I understand that the information provided will be kept confidential **to the researcher and her supervisor. I am aware that the published report** will not use names **and that no opinions will be attributed in any way that will identify individual participants. I understand that any recordings of interviews will be electronically wiped, and any interview notes will be destroyed one year after the project's conclusion.**

I understand that the report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. I understand that this report may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Key staff members in the Auckland Libraries youth services development team will read the report to see if they may use it to improve the young adult programs, services and collections.

I am aware that we will receive a summary of the report itself, when it has been completed.

I agree that _____, who is under my guardianship, may take part in this research.

Name:
Signed:

Appendix E: List of prepare d questions

Who: 3 groups of 7-11 students
Duration: 60 minutes maximum
Where: Howick Library – Howick Room; Tupu Youth Library – Meeting Room

The Focus Group sessions will begin with a series of introductions; introducing myself going through the goals of the research (which they will all be familiar with already, from the recruitment process), getting individuals to briefly introduce themselves i.e. name, age, books they like to read. I will go through some brief Focus Group conventions, which is especially important in regards to the age of my participants. This includes aspects such as being mindful that only one person is talking at a time, that answers should always refer back to the question as much as possible, that all participants should treat each other with respect, and, reminding participants that all data will be treated confidentially and that their personal names will not be used in the actual published report. I will take the responsibility to explain that whilst I would like to gather rich, honest and interesting data, I would also like participants to feel comfortable and not to give out information that is overly personal and/or unrelated to the objectives of the research.

Prepared questions:

- **What types of fiction books do you enjoy reading – format and genre?**
- **How often do you come to the public library to look for books? How do you go about trying to find books in the library? (For example – do you go to the catalogue and SEARCH or do you just like to just BROWSE through the shelves)**
- **In terms of the actual books – what aspects of the books themselves attract you to them? (cover, blurb, from a display, it's new, the fact that it is in a series, the genre, etc)**
- **How do the library's efforts to promote materials (displays, newsletters, RSS feeds, Facebook page, staff reviews) affect your fiction selection? Why effective? Why ineffective?**
- **Who are the people that influence your fiction selection? (I.e. family, friends, teachers, local librarians, celebrities, etc) Why are these people so influential?**
- **How does social media impact your fiction selection – and what types of social media are you connected with to help with your fiction selection?**
- **Within your social media connections, who has more impact over your fiction selection – friends/family/people you see on a regular basis anyway, or, people you have not actually met in person/from the wider web community?**

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