

# **Improving Young Adult Services Using Third Place Principles**

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**Leslie Gonzalez**  
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# Why Young Adult Services?

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- Personal background in secondary education
- Personal history of creating and administering programs for the young adult population
- Focus of my MLIS classes has been in youth services and leadership
- Believe young adults, ages 12 through 18, need same attention to space, personnel, and programs as children and adult services
- Believe “third place” philosophy is appropriate framework for creating and implementing young adult services



# Research Questions

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- **How can young adult services be improved using “third place” principles?**
- **How can public libraries implement “third place” principles into their young adult services?**



# Methods

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- I will pursue a qualitative, exploratory approach to my research.
- I will research original and current “third place” publications.
- I will research current young adult services’ best practices.
- I will compare and contrast “third place” principles with types of young adult services currently in practice.
- I will use a telephone survey to collect young adult services’ data measuring space, personnel, and programs from a representative sample of urban, suburban, and rural Georgia public library systems.
- I will make recommendations for a comprehensive young adult department based on “third place” principles based on my research.

# Third Place Principles

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Ray Oldenburg asserts that every person has a need for a “third place” other than home and work where each can feel welcome and comfortable. In *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* he lists six characteristics that third places, essential to community, have in common:

- Neutral ground
- Social leveling
- Conversation
- Ability to go alone and encounter acquaintances
- Unimpressive appearance
- Playful mood

# Third Place and Libraries

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- Cathryn Harris further explores Oldenburgh's principles in "Libraries with Lattes: The New Third Place" where she states that libraries are instrumental in facilitating a sense of community. She includes some fundamental ways that libraries can work towards incorporating more "third place" principles.
- Francine May asserts that libraries may be some of the last public spaces in communities when she analyzed the use of public libraries in her master's thesis, *In the Words of the Users: The Role of the Urban Public Library as Place*.
- In "Libraries in the USA as Traditional and Virtual Third Places," Karen Lawson states that libraries have a long tradition of connectedness and community that has put them in the forefront of traditional third places.

# Third Place and Young Adult Services

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- Space is top concern for young adults -- design space around the program, not the program around the space
- Young adult participation is key – Teen Advisory Boards; board representation; focus groups; committees.
- Research need, demand, and demographics.
- Use existing models for inspiration within and without the library profession.
- Build relationships and collaborate with the community.



# What the Results Might Be

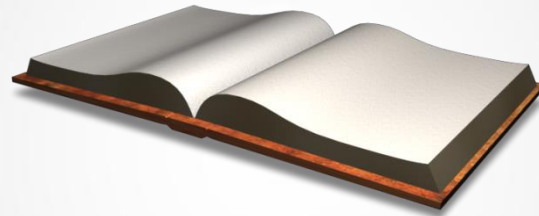
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- Improving young adult services using “third place” principles is occurring in public libraries, but more needs to be done.
- Libraries that have implemented “third place” principles for young adult services have seen an increase in targeted patrons.
- Current programs should be used as models.
- Implementing a comprehensive “third place” program for young adults is achievable and necessary.



# Questions or Comments?

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**Leslie Gonzalez**  
**ljgonzalez@valdosta.edu**  
**(706) 850-6452**

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