The Missing Link:
Teens in the Library

# The Missing Link: Teens in the Library

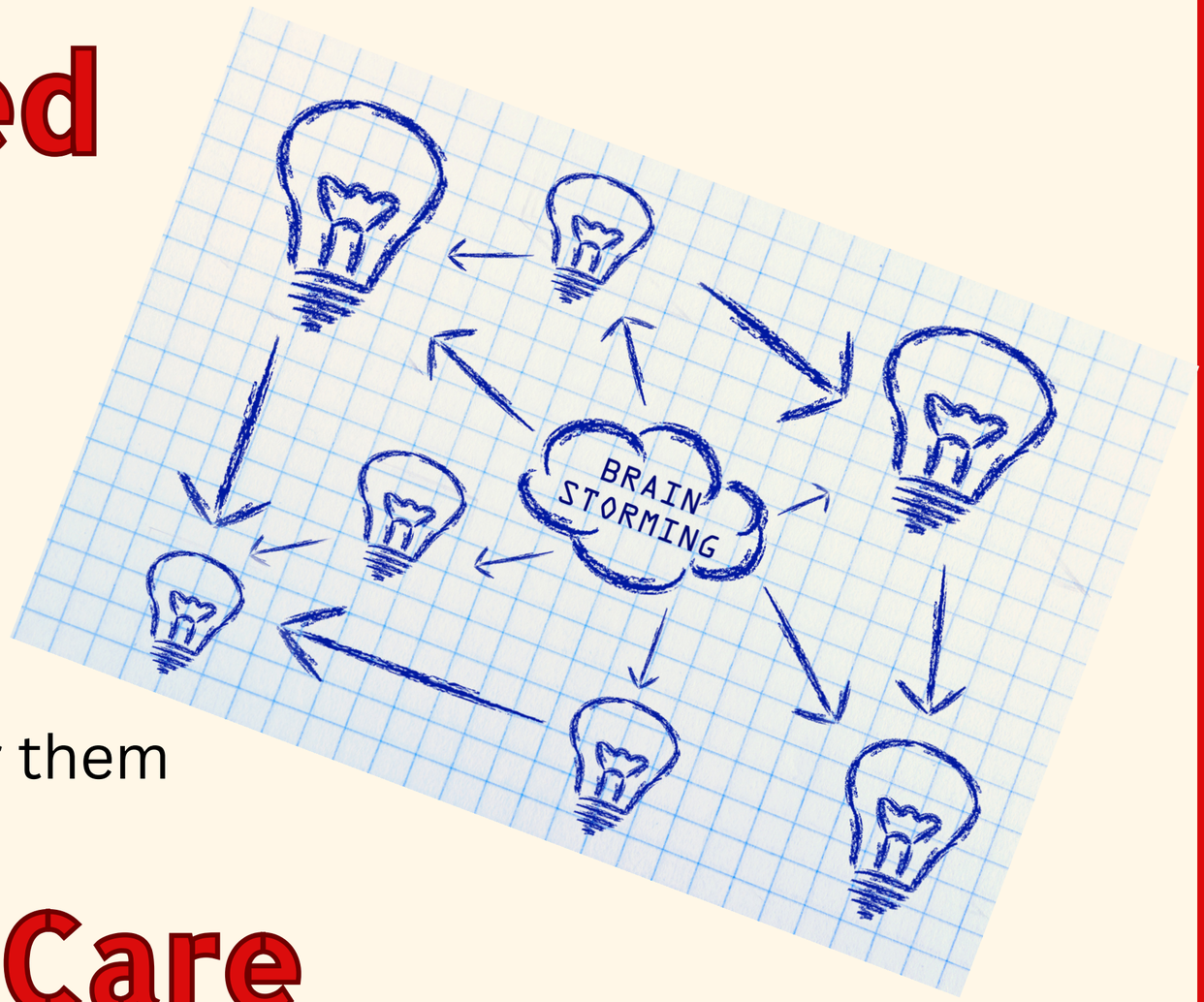
**Like Bigfoot:**

- Elusive Creatures
- Seldom seen in the library
- Scare easily
- Make loud noises
- Always hungry

# How to Get Teens in the Library

# What we perceived

- **Teens come to the library for:**
  - Social time with friends
  - Free internet and computers
  - Safe space (Parent resource)
  - Place to study and collaborate
  - Food
  - A program if it had relevance for them




# Why Should We Care

**Teens who use the library become adults who use and support the library**

**“ I remember in elementary the whole class would go there at least once a year but that’s stopped in junior high, so we don’t really hear much about it anymore.....kids our age don’t go; they don’t hear about it or they just don’t think about it.”**

**All quotes taken from a focus group on teen programming published in *The Library Quarterly* in July 2011**

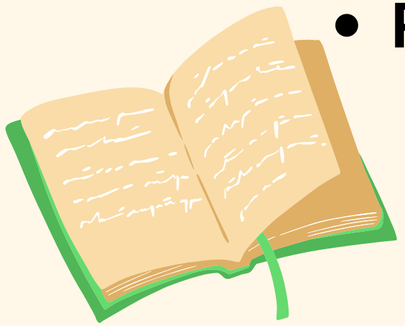
# Our Three-Headed Approach

Survey - What we ***ask*** them

Connect - How we ***hear*** them

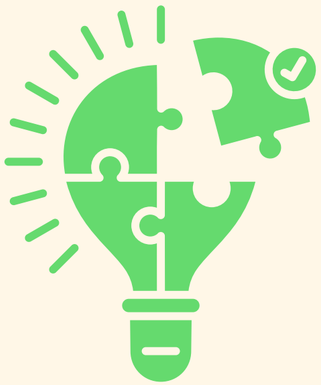
Programming - What we ***give*** them

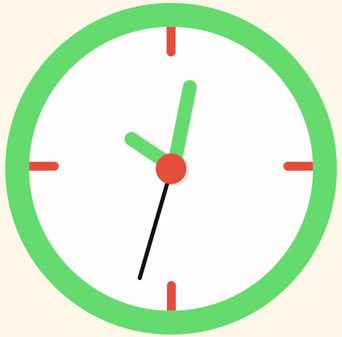
# Survey Elements



- **Personal Input**
  - Reader - how often, why
  - Library use
  - What influences what they read

- **At the Library**
  - Level of satisfaction
  - Activities/materials available
  - Sites/resources
  - How do you get information about the library





- **Their Needs**
  - Time available
  - Transportation
  - Needs/Wants
  - Space

# Survey Outreach

- School Principals
- Guidance Counselors
- Teachers we've done programs with
- Teachers we know personally
- Teen Patrons that come into the library
- YMCA during "no school" days

# Survey Results - Personal Input

- Mostly 4th and 6th grade responses - 99 responses
- 12% of the respondents were 7 - 12 grade
- 2/3 considered themselves readers
- 40% know they have a library card; 25% don’t know
- How often do you go to the library?
  - 30% - don’t
  - 22% - once a week or more

# Survey Results - Personal Input

- I read for... (check all that apply)
  - 53% - school assignments
  - 41-44% - pleasure, to learn, other
  - 10% - I don’t read

- I choose books by... (check all that apply)
  - 61% - cover
  - 49% - description on back
  - 39% - recommendations from friends

# Survey Results - At the Library

- Where do you get reading materials? (check all that apply)
  - 78% - school/classroom libraries
  - 43% - public library
  - 34% - Amazon/book stores

“I don’t like library books because they’re used and dirty sometimes. You don’t know where those books have been. They could have been in someone’s laundry or bathroom or you just don’t want to know.”

# Survey Results - At the Library

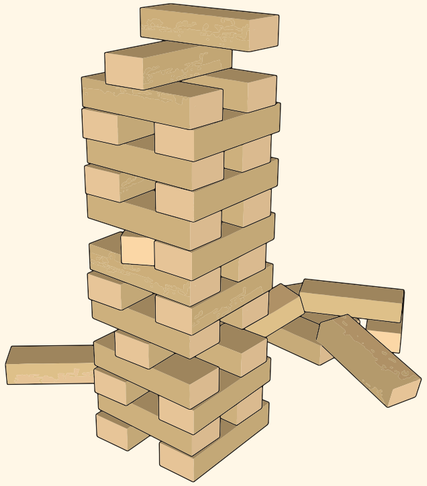
- I find out about programs...(check all that apply)
  - 30% - word of mouth/parents
  - 28% - library website
  - 27% - not interested in knowing
  - 23% - school announcements; other
  - 15% or less - social media; info around town, within library, tv/radio
- Which of these Algona Public Library sites have you visited? (Check all...)
  - 62% - None
  - 27% - Website
  - 19% - Facebook
  - 4% - Instagram
  - 4% - My Libro App

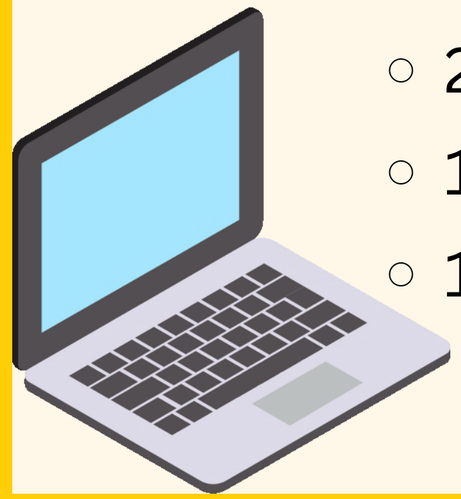
# Survey Results - At the Library

- What events that we currently offer are you interested in?

  (Check all that apply)

  - 47% - Books
  - 44% - Games
  - 39% - Computer use
  - 28% - Puzzles
  - 25% - Chess; I’m not familiar with what is offered
  - 22% - STEAM cart workshop
  - 18% - Summer Reading Program
  - 12% - Tween book club

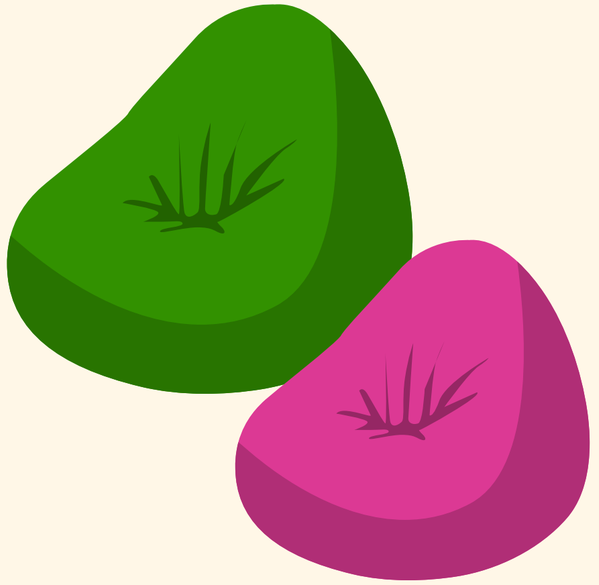




# Survey Results - Their Needs

- Do you have a means of coming to the library on “no school” and after school?
  - 55.5% - Yes
  - 44.5% - No

- What do you look for when coming to the public library? (Check all that apply)
  - 58% - Comfortable seating
  - 49% - Place to hang out with friends
  - 48% - Games; quiet private space
  - 44% - Coffee and snacks
  - 41% - Computers
  - 22% - Programs
  - 20% - Separate space away from kids and adults



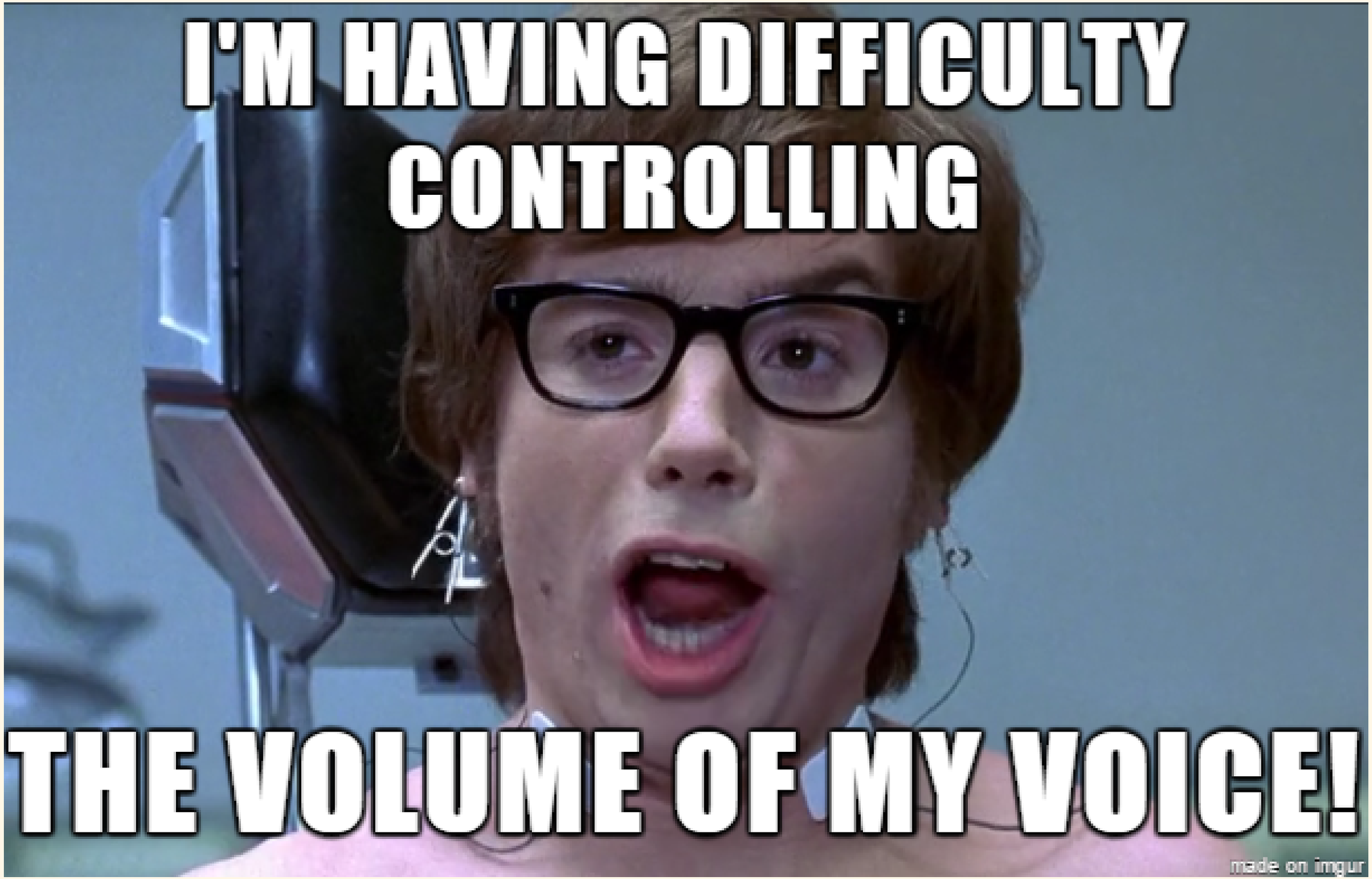
# Survey Elements

***What other questions would you ask?***

# Understanding Teens' Brains

- Not fully developed - impulsive
- Any correction feels like an attack
- Sense of responsibility is still developing
  - Commitments are short
  - Items get left behind
  - Have to touch EVERYTHING
  - Making sure the magnetic letters don't spell inappropriate words after they leave

***And always remember...***


I'M HAVING DIFFICULTY CONTROLLING
THE VOLUME OF MY VOICE!
made on imgur

# Understanding Teens' Wants

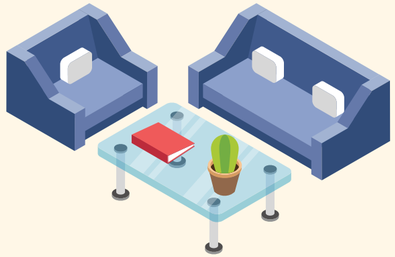
- Feel Welcome
  - Large vs Small Libraries
- Relax/Socialize
- Value Their Input
  - What can we control
  - What can we change
  - What are we willing to change

# Understanding Teens

***How do you connect and get them to share ideas?***

# Programming

- Not always programs



- Providing a space
- Self-driven is okay
  - Guide on the side

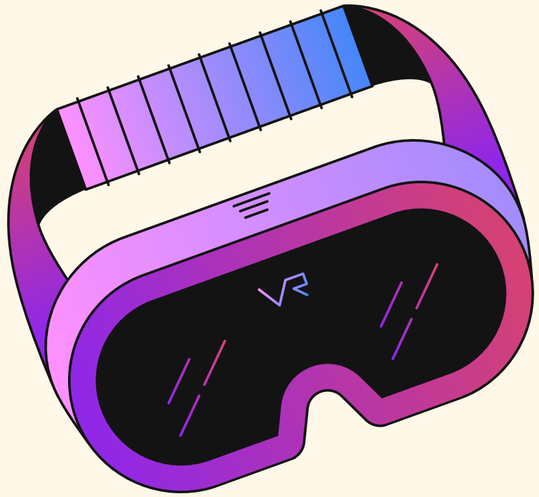
- STEAM cart/activities
- Coding/programming
- Chess

- Trivia
- Rubik’s Cube
- Book Clubs

# Survey Results: Programming

- Do you think of the library as a place that offers programs for teens/tweens?
  - 89% said yes or maybe

- Other activities survey respondents listed
  - Crafts, sports?, VR, outdoor activities, cooking, movies, bingo, anime/manga, volunteering

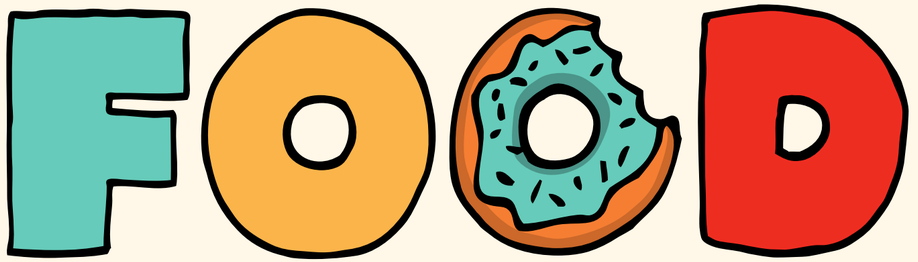


# Survey Results: Non-Programming

- What are three things that would bring you into the library?
  - **Top answers:** Things you would bring into the library

*What REALLY Brings Them In?*

**Quiet/comfy area, friends, food**



# Food in the Library

**“Having food would be good.  I know they worry about people messing up the books but people take the books home and read them while they’re eating, so what’s the difference?”**

# *What are some challenges your library is facing?*

***What's working for you?***

# Resources

https://action.everylibrary.org/how_do_teens_use_public_libraries?

https://www.ila.org/publications/ila-reporter/article/77/teen-services-a-fresh-perspective

What Do Young Teens Think about the Public Library?
Vivian Howard
The Library Quarterly 2011 81:3, 321-344

# Contact info

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