

## Programming for Millennials, Gen X & Y, and Young Adults

*based on experiences at Piscataway Public Library & created for the NJLA Annual Conference*

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Nostalgia programming like Piscataway Library's Retro Gaming Day and "Turn It Up: Celebrating Cassette Tape Culture" hold strong appeal for young adults (20s, 30s, 40s), but an added benefit is that such programs draw in a wide range of ages – families, groups of teens, independent older adults, and kids, too. With such programs, we try to offer a variety of opportunities for participants to interact with the material and each other.

Young adults – as they get older – often become interested in giving back to their community or participating in volunteer efforts, based not on the NEED to, but through the desire to make a difference or interact with like-minded people. Libraries that offer some community service opportunities can draw this age group in a truly worthwhile way.

Many adults lead busy lives, and most crave social interaction – based not just on likeness of age, but more-so on shared interests and lifestyles. Lots of "regular" programming should work, if promoted through effective avenues to reach the target audience. Small groups of individuals with particular interests, knowledge, or skills might also be enthusiastic about hosting presentations within the library, so forming relationships is important. Libraries have an amazing opportunity to provide all ages with a great social, interactive, mutually-beneficial space. Programs that run off of participation and freedom of expression like Open Mic Nights, Music Workshops, Creative Writing Workshops, and Poetry Readings also work particularly well in many communities for this age group. Off-site programming is not to be discounted.

There many great programming ideas out there (just ask Google), but remember that most types of programming can be done with ANY age group. Your audience depends more on how you skew your focus toward one interest or one age group or another, and how and where you promote! Young adults are particularly tuned into social media and are comfortable inside mobile spaces, so use what you know in order to reach specific age groups. Connect with local community colleges and universities, as well as other community organization that may or may not already be providing some programming for young adults – or who might know some young adults with whom you can begin to form relationships!

When attempting to come up with some innovative, outside-the-box ideas for events and programs that you could host in your library, don't be afraid of collaboration – with community members and organizations especially, but also with co-workers, colleagues, friends, and social networks. In addition to good old-fashioned face-to-face interactions, here you'll find JUST A FEW wonderful resources for collaboration:

- CoolbrariansNJ Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/100122886746041/>
- ALA Think Tank Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ALAtinkTANK/>
- NJLA Sections and Committees (YA Section, IT Section, Reference Section, among many others)
- NJLA Annual Conference
- YALSA's Serving New Adults Interest Group (serving new adults, ages 18+)
- National, state, regional, and locally-sponsored workshops, events, and listservs

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And, yes, programming ideas really are everywhere. Creating a successful program for your library might depend on how you tweak the program to work for your particular community and your audience. Here is a sampling of ideas, but it's really meant to motivate and inspire your own creativity!

### Emerging Adults and Gen Y:

- Basic cooking classes and recipe exchanges
- Financial workshops for tips on paying college debts and student loans, renting apartments, leasing or buying a car, managing or avoiding credit debt, and checking credit ratings
- Interior design tips for apartment living or small first homes
- Tools for non-tool users
- Singles nights
- De-cluttering and Organizing
- Job-related programming, particularly focused on evaluating career opportunities, job searching techniques, current resume and cover letter writing, and interview and follow-up tips; also, personality tests and evaluation
- Self-defense
- Wedding planning, especially DIY wedding tips and tricks
- Etiquette and planning of bridal showers, baby showers, and other parties
- Community service groups, volunteers, student workers and interns

### Gen X:

- Programs with a focus on their children: college-planning workshops (choosing the right college, help with applications and financial aid, information about SAT/ACT); bullying and cyber-bullying, rights and protections; how to handle drug abuse, dating violence, eating disorders/habits; family health.
- Programs with a focus on single older individuals: plan and promote programs centered on a common interest, highlighting the social aspect for those who are looking for that type of interaction like film showings, food tastings, discussion groups (books, movies, events, travel, etc.), and pretty much anything!
- Programs with a focus on work or gaining employment: job searching for career transitions, office politics and relationships, career development and improvement, time management (on the job and in life), maintaining friendships, and more.

## Retro Gaming Day

Beg and borrow to set up as many video game consoles and monitors/television sets that you can come up with. Ask some gaming “experts” to be on-hand for questions and discussion opportunities. Come up with craft ideas to keep little ones busy and interested. We created 8-big Pac Man paper crafts, but there are lots of other ideas for simple activities if you look or ask around a bit. As an alternative option, especially for an annual RGD, focus on specific types of games or specific genres (i.e. hand held devices). While RGD is done with a focus on video games at Piscataway Library, don’t hesitate to also incorporate board games and more!



## Turn It Up : Celebrating Cassette Tape Culture

The idea for this program came about with a large donation of cassette tapes – mostly 90s hits. We took the bait and set up a program that celebrated this niche culture of music history. We connected with some local radio stations, as well as other individuals with a strong interest and enthusiasm for the cassette tape. Orange Mitch ([www.orangemitch.com/whos-mitch.html](http://www.orangemitch.com/whos-mitch.html)) joined us for the event to talk about music, cassette tapes, and art, and we allowed him to sell wallets/change purses that he creates using cassette tapes. We also set up a few activities for all ages, like creating words and images using the actual tape of the cassette. Plus, we had hundreds of cassette tapes and multiple tape players for everyone’s enjoyment!



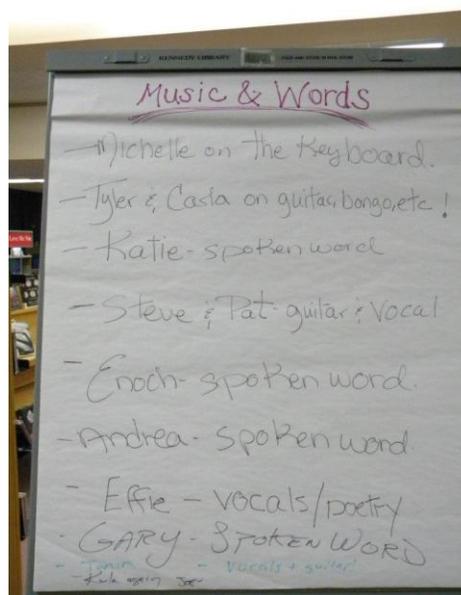
## Guitar Workshop

We invited guitar instructor, Jeff Saxon, to host an all-ages guitar workshop, which gathered together children, teens, young adults, and older adults! All participants were required to bring an acoustic guitar to the program, and others were allowed to observe as well.



## Music & Words : Open Mic Night

We love to revisit our youth with nostalgic programming opportunities, but kids, teens, and adults all love to have the freedom to express themselves. Open Mic Nights are relatively simple to set up as long as you have some space to be loud! We opted to host our Open Mic Night after the library was closed for the evening, and we allowed people to attend the event as participants or audience members. We limited registration to those 18 and older to avoid having to censor language, as well as to avoid permission slips. We had two full-time staff members adjust their hours to oversee the evening, and we were fortunate to have a custodian available during his regular evening work hours to help with clean-up and security. This event attracted not only a broad range of ages, but quite an eclectic mix of style and flair!



## 20/30 Book Club

This book group began as a discussion group for readers in their 20s and 30s and has since evolved into a group open to all “young” adults, where “attitude is everything!” No one is turned away, but it’s geared toward a more youthful audience, particularly those scared away by the book groups made up of largely senior citizens. Piscataway Library’s 20/30 Book Club started by meeting monthly inside the library and has evolved into a group that plans to meet off-site at a local bar in Piscataway. We have plans to also coordinate with a local shop for a wine tasting and book discussion combo! Our options are endless as long as we have a steady stream of participants, locations, and books.

Check out this book list for some great recommendations:

[http://njla.pbworks.com/w/file/54176963/Presentation\\_Handout\\_-\\_Booklist.pdf](http://njla.pbworks.com/w/file/54176963/Presentation_Handout_-_Booklist.pdf)

