Book Tweets and Snappy Reads: Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens

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Abstract

Booktalking is an essential professional competency for young adult (YA) librarians, as it connects teen readers with text and literature for the purpose of instilling viable lifelong reading practices. This article introduces "Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens" (BEMT), a collection of research-supported booktalking techniques that have been effectively taught across two ALA-accredited Library and Information Science (LIS) programs within the past decade. The BEMT techniques promote booktalks by taking into careful consideration contemporary teens' social developmental multitasking literacy skills across various technology platforms including computers, smartphones, and social media.[i] The research explored in this work substantiates ways in which YA librarians can more effectively engage with these young audiences such that their approach is more appropriately aligned with young adult developmental needs. In an era where teen readers are looking to connect with multimodal texts that are engaging, relative, and edifying, I posit that the BEMT techniques discussed here are a renewed approach to booktalking that promotes a vital competency of contemporary YA librarianship.

Keywords: teens, young adults, literacy practices, adolescent development, booktalking, readers advisory, techniques, literature.

Introduction

As we enjoy this second decade of the twenty-first century, teens and young adults are cross-multitasking via oral, print, and electronic environments, as they have more than just the telephone to enact and perfect the loquacious interpersonal skills that are so vital to their ongoing human development.[ii] We see how digital technologies have become intimately embedded within school and public library interactions in various formats such as texting via cell phones and popular social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, and Facebook. As a result, YA librarians are constantly seeking ways to effectively connect with youth readers via these contemporary outlets.[iii]

Research shows that one outcome of all these digital ways of interaction is that young people have become short-attention-spanned multitaskers.[iv] This means that new ways of reading and interacting with text have emerged in schools and libraries that are challenging traditional norms about what it means to engage with reading and the desire to read. This is an important concern because we know that in spite of electronic access to texts that seemingly having a deep impact on human interaction and discourse, two things are true:

1) There's still a significant percentage of the population that is *not* plugged into technology (i.e., the digital divide).
2) Reading text in print format is still fundamental to human growth, cognition, and interaction, and is *preferred* by YA readers.[v]

In YA library services, the competencies we enact to encourage teens to read include reference interactions for school assignments and readers advisory (RA) conversations for leisure reading. We know that fiction reading is important for teen brain development;[vi] however, today's YA literature often embeds digital dialogue (e.g., text messages and e-mails) as part of the narratives in novels, comics, and other literary works.[vii] How teens socially interact is reflected in texts published for their readership. Modern YA publishers take into account teens' tech savviness and their quick multitasking habits of information gathering and processing, packaging narratives in formats that facilitate these new ways of reading. In turn, we librarians must now (re)consider the ways in which we seek to engage teens with modern YA literature. Book-review-length booktalks are no longer a convincing sell. The times call for booktalk strategies that reflect the creativity, clarity, brevity, and speed that today's teens employ when interacting socially and online.

Research Questions

For RA purposes, we librarians utilize the booktalk as a methodology for informing young readers about current offerings in YA literature. Just as teen interactions with text have evolved, so too must librarians' ways of promoting texts. In this work, I introduce booktalking techniques that are supported by adolescent development and literacy research and that uniquely contemplate developmentally appropriate styles to engaging the multitasking, short-attention-spanned, digitally distracted teen reader[viii] with relevant literature in multimodal ways.

Further, this article explores questions about competencies needed by librarians for booktalking with twenty-first-century YA audiences. Literacy practices of today's teen invariably include some kind of technology, including locating, accessing, and even the reading of books. I posit that real-time, digitally-based interactive practices can be exploited within booktalking practices to productively engage teens' interest in reading current literature in print format.[ix]

The six foundational booktalking techniques that are introduced in this article have been successfully taught to pre-service librarians within two ALA-accredited LIS programs over the past decade. The techniques sit on the shoulders of traditional booktalking practices, but are structured to reflect an evolution in booktalking that coincides with contemporary YA developmental assets and needs that have become decidedly immersed with the effects of digital

data on reading practices. To honor the new ways in which today's youth see, hear, and engage with text, we librarians must consider the following questions:

a) What kinds of techniques can we employ to booktalk YA literature with today's teens in ways that can truly entice them to want to read classic and contemporary literature in various formats?
b) What techniques can librarians employ that take into respect the tech-connected attention spans of teens that is quick, short-handed, and punchy, yet meaningful and fulfilling?

Admittedly we have a plethora of research and how-to manuals telling us how to booktalk to the YA audience.[x] However, these techniques continue to resemble adult book reviews rather than creative literary introductions that cleverly highlight engaging YA books. Booktalking manuals continue to show us how to write out and perform booktalks that are overly long and that overly reveal plot and content (i.e., spoilers). I contend that booktalk manuals are still being written for the adult librarian and his/her professional preferences, rather than for the YA reader with contemporary interests and tastes. Stemming from my own professional experiences with classroom school visits, middle and high school library visits, as well as readers' advisory conversations, the following techniques were devised in response to what ultimately worked to capture the engagement of the twenty-first-century teen audiences that I encountered. This approach invariably led to increased circulation of YA materials, as well as new teen patrons visiting the library during after-school hours. Additionally, the model I am proposing has been successfully implemented in LIS YA courses I taught across two ALA-accredited programs over the past decade.

Literature Review

The literature that frames and supports the theoretical basis for "Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens" (BEMT) techniques comes from adolescent literacy research and insights from the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS) as applied to LIS research. This literature review takes into account ways that teens respond to new literacy practices of the twenty-first century, where digital technology has become an embedded aspect of daily living. LIS research charges librarians to broaden their ideas about what it means to read and to be a reader, thus encouraging us to embrace new literacy practices (that are invariably digitally embedded) as part of our professional practices.

With the digital age, texts have become more complex.[xi] In fact, the International Reading Association (IRA) cited the 1999 adolescent literacy report by Moore et al., where they explained that literacy and comprehension strategies for adolescent learning should include the following:

- Activating their prior knowledge of the topic and text.
- Predicting and questioning themselves about what they read.
- Making connections to their lives and other texts and to their expanding worlds.
- Summarizing key ideas.
- Synthesizing information from various sources.

- Identifying, understanding, and remembering key vocabulary.
- Attending to text cues and features to recognize how a text is organized, then using that text organization as a tool for learning.
- Organizing information in notes, graphs, and charts, or other representations of key ideas.
- Searching the Internet and other resources for related information.
- Monitoring and judging their own understanding.
- Evaluating authors' ideas and perspectives.[xii]

The IRA says that Moore et al.'s ideas should be incorporated by educators so that "all teachers can effectively support adolescent learners as they learn from all kinds of texts by teaching these general strategies through the discipline-specific print and non-print materials that continue to expand rapidly."[xiii] I posit that we librarians are the key population of the educator pool to employ this stratagem in school media centers and public libraries for middle and high schoolers, as well as academic libraries for college-attending young adults.

Because many of today's young adults (millennials) are born with access to a digital world, twenty-first-century literacy can be defined as the ability to efficiently navigate texts, symbols, languages, and interactions across print and electronic platforms, in various flexible formats. Today's teens regularly engage in traditional reading practices with print texts, as well through online activities that include social media websites and discussion forums that may expand their personal reading experiences.

In his work with teens, Brandt explores teen responses to their own literacy practices to reveal how "literacy has 'piled up' in various forms and practices and 'spread out' into various life domains."[xiv] We must also take into account that such varied literacy events simultaneously occur across diverse social, cultural, and global contexts. Within all these considerations, teens' approaches to reading typically involves reading a little of many things in many formats, quickly, and only once. Keller calls this kind of fast-paced multitasking a "culture of acceleration," where "literacies appear, change, [and] merge with other literacies, and fade at a faster rate."[xv]

This fast-paced multitasking approach has become integrated into all of our daily lives, ever changing and flexible, rarely static.[xvi] Along with these immediate social and online interactions, the measured pace of leisure reading still allows one to immerse her/himself into a deeper reading stance that counters these newer literacy practices. In her report on the effects of technology on multitasking habits of today's teens, Hill asks the essential question, "What type of [library] programming will attract and hold the attention of the multitasking teen?"[xvii] Responding to this challenge, Koss provides contexts in which contemporary YA literature that features digital media practices among characters can be used to engage teen readers. Koss asserts that incorporating digital media in YA fiction narratives can enhance teens' reading comprehension, vocabulary, and language development.

YA librarians seeking to connect with teen readers need techniques that balance fast, social-digital literary practices with slower, interpersonal reading skills. With the BEMT techniques, we librarians can offer carefully composed booktalks that respect the time-strained realities of teen lives along with their desire for meaningful narratives to connect to for their own self-directed

purposes. Librarians can incorporate creative use of language with technology and social media to create a booktalking repertoire that will engage teens via video booktalks and book trailers, blogged booktalks, and multimodal booktalks using web-based technology (e.g., booktalk presentations as Prezis).[xviii] Well-planned, strategically organized, and succinctly presented booktalks that respect the complex ways in which teens engage with texts today can be vital in teaching teens how to strategically engage with building their own literary lifestyles.[xix]

Romer's work with researching teen health information behavior informs the need for booktalks that appeal to the adolescent developmental effects of joyful experiences, immediate gratification, and peer approval.[xx] For many teen readers, exploring a new author or topic or genre is a risk, as they head off into unknown territory. Romer sees risk taking as an important developmental aspect of decision making for young adults.[xxi] Considering which texts to integrate into one's literary lifestyle requires librarians to actively and energetically involve teen readers in their booktalk presentations.

Further, Romer's research reveals that "risk taking leads to a reduction in impatience as assessed with a delay discounting task."[xxii] This means that if teen readers are piqued to take a chance on reading something new, there is a good probability that they will also have the patience to read the text deeply, particularly when peer influence is compatible with their interests (i.e., teens co-reading authors, titles, and genres). Booktalks that are clear and succinct yet require engagement/response from teens can help with the development of patience and possibly lead to slow, measured reading that elucidates deep meaning and sense making. Thus, with socially and developmentally appropriate booktalks, librarians can create a safe social environment where teens are encouraged to make decisions for themselves in terms of choosing ideas, concepts, and narratives that pique their interests and expose them to new ideas.

In 2012 Purcell et al. spearheaded a Pew study where they surveyed over 2,400 American public middle school and high school teachers to understand how they perceive their students' research capabilities in this digital age. Overwhelmingly, teachers found that even advanced students are easily distracted by the multitasking, multimodal digital world in which we live. Two-thirds of the teachers reported that search engines have "conditioned students to expect to be able to find information quickly and easily" and that "doing research" has become an exercise of fast-paced searching as opposed to the slower, more measured approach of pre-Internet generations.[xxiii] Teachers also observed that students exhibit low patience for locating information, and that given the heavy electronic environment where information overload is commonplace, today's teens are also "an easily distracted generation with short attention spans."[xxiv]

Berg encourages librarians to embrace these "new literacies" because they are participatory, collaborative, and interactive within the author-reader dynamic more so than ever before.[xxv] Berg's study involved working with eight teens in a public library as they sat at computer workstations and interacted simultaneously across computers, cell phones, and face-to-face. The study analyzed the teens' conversations over a two-year period to learn how the computer was used as a "cultural tool" to mediate teen talk.[xxvi] Berg learned that the teens used online work in the library in a variety of responsive ways: referential, authoritative, experiential, expressionistic, and mechanical. Berg also noted that how teens interact out of school, at public libraries, closely mirrors and thus reinforces teens' in-school literacy practices. In this vein, developmentally and

interactively appropriate booktalks can be a meaningful lens through which teen readers can engage with YA librarians and the books they are promoting. In-library practices that involve all the platforms that teens engage in (technological, textual, and social) can assist teens with positively and enthusiastically engaging in all kinds of meaningful reading.

In light of this evidence, librarians must meet teen informational needs in formats in which teens themselves communicate. Cart challenges librarians to reconsider what they mean when they say "reading" while working with teens who are constantly ensconced in a world where reading involves print, mobile, gaming, and social media platforms[xxvii]. As various formats in packaging and content emerge, as genres blend and intersect, and as self-motivated pleasure reading interests and tastes coincide with required assigned readings from school, our booktalks must involve as many of these aspects of today's teens' reading repertoire as possible.

Booktalking Methodology for the Twenty-First-Century Teen Reader

Booktalks are known to have the potential of being effective library marketing and readers advisory tools for all reading audiences. In the public library, booktalks are done in-house, as part of readers advisory with patrons or as a program for visiting class or community groups. Booktalks are also a good outreach tool for when you visit school libraries, classrooms, senior centers, and other community outlets. Booktalks encourage and excite readers to come to the library to check out books. The more we librarians stay tuned in with the constantly evolving ways of reading that teens employ, the better equipped we are to serve our communities.

The purpose of a booktalk is to introduce your audience to books at your library. Booktalking with teens in today's harried technological world can, at times, seem like a lost cause, as the constant blurb talking of books can quickly become boring. However, with careful planning and creative strategies that respect teens' fluidic literacy practices, a YA booktalk can actually capture young people's attention and draw them into meaningful responsiveness to reading.

Booktalks are like infomercials for library materials (and librarians), which means that they are not meant to be long treatments, reviews, or retellings of narratives, but instead must be quick, impactful *performances.* Booktalks can be effectively performed to include various formats such as books/eBooks, audiobooks, movies, and music and book CDs—virtually every media format available can be effectively booktalked.

Contrary to popular belief, young adults today do enjoy being read to. Read-alouds appeal to teens' cognitive developmental need to hear and play with language, speech, and vocabulary.[xxviii] However, nuisances must be noted, as younger teens have shorter attention spans and need constant intrigue to keep them interested, while older teens like to express their "knowingness" and appreciate opportunities to interact with you during the booktalk. Don't be surprised if older teens interrupt your booktalk and change its flow. Engage with your audience and booktalk their requests.

As the librarian, you must appear to enjoy reading aloud *short, interesting* excerpts of books to your audience; making sure that the passage you pick are intriguing in ways that are appropriate for the book and the audience. For example, for younger audiences, reading an excerpt of a book

where the character shows emotion will keep them interested, especially when you apply a little drama to your act for emphasis and impact. For older teens, reading aloud allows them to rest from active thinking and processing and gives them the treat of absorbing information without consequence. Excerpts should provoke the imagination with visuals of action, scenery, or character development, and your booktalks need to have intentional tonality and pacing to create the scene you are conveying. Booktalking to older teens can serve as an emotional release, giving them a needed reprieve from being responsible for the information they are receiving (as opposed to facts on top of facts at school). You can use booktalking as a segue into storytelling for young adults.

By and large, booktalks are best when creatively written, practiced, and then *performed*. With the Internet as a major avenue of interacting with (and redefining) text these days, a well-written booktalk is just as big of a performance as a live booktalk. The following booktalking techniques I've devised to engage millennial teens (BEMT) are tried-and-true from my years of frontline librarianship, as well as a decade of my teaching these techniques to pre-service librarians in the classrooms across two ALA-accredited LIS programs. The techniques primarily take into consideration the factor of *time* in respect to teen attentiveness and engagement. Case in point, Reynolds and Givens specify that we speak an average of 130–190 words per minute.[xxix] I have found that booktalks longer than 60 seconds risk losing the interest of twenty-first-century teens.

So the question becomes: how do you grab their interest in a book within a minute? To engage millennial teens, the BEMT techniques are as follows: *Book Tweet*, *Wrap Back*, *Open End*, *Graphic Form*, *Snap'n Read*, and *Power-Full Points.* Each BEMT technique averages a word count of 50–155 words, which means that when spoken/performed, they average between 30–60 seconds per booktalk. BEMT techniques can be combined with one another to create a viable repertoire that can remain fluid as you add and subtract booktalks from your program. For example, you can create your own repertoire where you open with three *Book Tweets* to set the pace, then one *Snap'n Read* to engage visualization, followed by perhaps two *Wrap Backs* to pique interest, added with two more *Book Tweets* (again for pacing), one *Graphic Form* for visuality, then close out with an *Open End* to leave your audience intrigued. With practice, you can booktalk ten books in ten minutes.

These time-effective techniques provide time for audience participation and interaction. With a good 10-to-15-minute presentation, you can catch *and keep* the focused attention of your young audience, allowing time for them to ask questions about titles that interest them, to share narratives they personally relate to, and to incorporate other activities to further connect teens with the library (e.g., trivia games, prizes, announcements, etc.). Further, these techniques can become an iterative repertoire where librarians can add more booktalks as they create and learn to supplement their program, and these booktalks can be spliced, remixed, and used at anytime, anywhere, for readers' advisory.

Booktalking to Engage Millennial Teens: Introducing the BEMT Techniques

The following are examples of each BEMT technique in the series (with word counts).

BEMT Technique #1: *Book Tweets*

Book Tweets are one-to-two-line hooks that leave the audience wanting more. In this vein, the booktalk has to be a punchy, cleverly written appeal to the linguistic savviness of the teen mind. *Book Tweets* work well with teen audiences because they are quick and impactful: a lot is said with few words. This approach allows teens to view their YA librarian as someone who respects impatience (an aspect of learning delayed gratification)[xxx] as an ordinary aspect of language and social interaction.[xxxi] This *Book Tweet* example (fig. 1) is from the still-popular YA novel *The Coldest Winter Ever*, by Sister Souljah (New York: Atria, 1999):

Winter is the rough and tough princess of a Brooklyn drug dealer, who learns the hard way that life can be colder than she could ever be. [Character count: 137] *Learn how a princess is awakened to the real world where daily living can feel like "The Coldest Winter Ever."* [Character count: 109; total word count: 47]

In this example, I've combined two *Book Tweets* to illustrate how each tweet can work together or they can stand alone. *Book Tweets* are powerful because librarians can readily memorize them and be able to effectively present multiple titles over an extended period of time. Additionally, you can actually use the Twitter website (with the requisite 140-character limit) as a platform to microblog your *Book Tweets* (with an accompanying book cover image).[xxxii]

BEMT Technique #2: *Wrap Back*

It is very effective when you begin telling the highlights of a story, and then end the talk by connecting the booktalk back to the title. This is called the *Wrap Back* technique. Teens really enjoy the cleverness of this technique and tend to be more apt to remember the book when the title is introduced formally at the beginning of the booktalk and then interwoven into the conclusion of the booktalk. Another passage from *The Coldest Winter Ever* illustrates this:

> *Winter was born on a cold, cold night in the rough 'hood of Brooklyn. Perhaps that's why her mother named her Winter—so she would be able to face the cold realities of this hard-knocks world. . . . Midnight, Papa Santiaga's right-hand man, tries to steer Winter in the right direction, but she's not having it. Stubborn, scared, and reckless, does Winter desert her family and go for hers? Or does she move past her delusions and obsessions? Read this coming-of-age tale to find out if this young lady's life becomes "The Coldest Winter Ever."* [Total word count: 99]

Wrap Back is particularly appealing to today's teens because it can personify the book's characters, setting, and pace while using the contact-creating patterns of teen language.[xxxiii] *Wrap Back* is also a strong technique with its ability to pack a lot of visuality into a quickly conveyed summary of the novel's theme. (In the example, Winter is steered in a good direction but strays from the path.)[xxxiv]

BEMT Technique #3: *Open End*

The *Open End* technique is similar to *Wrap Back* except you begin the booktalk with a question (or questions) and end it with a question. This sample (fig. 2) is taken from the award-winning book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick (New York: Scholastic Press, 2007):

> *Well: Just WHO is Hugo Cabret? This novel takes you back in time with captivating black-and-white artwork that paces the story like an action movie. So even though this book looks thick . . . it reads . . . like . . . this [snap your fingers]. . . . Hugo is an orphan who becomes the clock keeper for a Paris train station after his father dies. Alone and on his own, Hugo meets a toy shop owner and his niece at the train station. The girl and Hugo embark on a series of adventures that leads them to a magician, a library, and the "father of science fiction movies"; all to learn that they, and the machine, are more connected than they realize. Ultimately through a series of fortunate events, you learn what is the secret to "The Invention of Hugo Cabret"?* [Total word count: 131]

Open End, like *Wrap Back*, appeals to teens' language tendencies known as "teen talk" or "teen speak."[xxxv] Today's teen speak (particularly among girls) is often lilting in tone with an open-ended cadence of expressions and sentences ending with a questioning tone, even if the statement is not a question. This technique serves to implant the book title into the booktalk as an expression of the story's plot. Both the *Open End* and *Wrap Back* techniques appeal to teen speak, as they are relatable to teens' everyday expression.

BEMT Technique #4: *Graphic Form*

Graphic Form is useful for alternative-format books such as graphic novels, epistolary novels, novels in verse, unique formulas, as well as nonfiction books.[xxxvi] For reluctant readers, it is key with this technique to *open the book and pass it around to the audience* so that they can see the format of the story. This approach encourages direct interaction with the audience, which is important for grabbing the attention of today's teen reader. An example of the *Graphic Form* using a unique formula novel (fig. 3) is Walter Dean Myers's *Monster* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999).
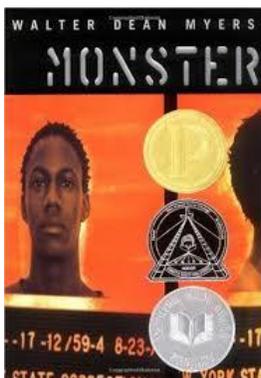
Steve is a sixteen-year-old teen growing up in Harlem. Much to his dismay, he finds himself with the wrong people, in the wrong place, at the wrong time—ending up in jail—and on trial for murder and attempted robbery. Steve chronicles his trial by [open the book to any page to show format] writing his experience in the form of a film script. Why? Because in truth, Steve is just a geeky kid who is a student in his high school film club. [Slowly keep turning pages to show the format as you pan it around the room.] Steve is scared, but he keeps writing. Steve is confused, but he keeps writing. Steve is sad, but he keeps writing. He's living a real-life horror movie. But he's just a kid. A kid who wonders . . . if he's . . . a Monster. [Total word count: 113]

When using the *Graphic Form* with graphic novels, it is important to play up the artistry of the illustrations; it's vital to not rush the presentation of the book. For nonfiction, play up colors, breakout boxes, and so on. For epistolary novels and novels in verse, pass the book around so the

audience can see the format. The *Graphic Form* appeals to visual readers and learners, particularly boys.

BEMT Technique #5: *Snap'n Read*

Snap'n Read is a creative read-aloud technique that appeals to auditory learners.[xxxvii] This technique gives an annotative snapshot of the book, then a short read-aloud of an attention-grabbing section (no more than a few sentences), closing with a statement that entices the reader to borrow the book. Figure 4 exemplifies the *Snap'n Read* technique via John Green's *Paper Towns* (New York: SPEAK, Penguin), 2009:

Why is Quentin following Margo around dressed like a ninja? Because he likes her, of course. And Margo is always on some solo adventure; but this time, she's included Quentin in her agenda. Then she disappears on him. At first Quentin thought Margo was just acting out of her usual awesomeness. But she didn't have to be gone long for the rumors to start . . . For example, check out what Quentin's friend Ben had to say [open book to page 93]: "I hear she's not answering her phone. . . . Someone else said she met a guy online"—to which Quentin says, "Ridiculous . . . She's somewhere by herself having the kind of fun we can only imagine." After considering possibilities for Margo's disappearance, Quentin and his friends set out to find her. Quentin worries: Is Margo having the best of times? . . . Or the worst of times? . . . Or if she is still here, on the planet, at all. [Total word count: 163]

The *Snap'n Read* is not a regular read-aloud, as librarians have to perform the dialogue (with alternating voices, emotive facial expressions, etc.), paint the scenery, and draw their audience into the book. The most important consideration for the *Snap'n Read* is that the "read" part must not be too long. Your booktalk must still fit within a 150–200 word limit, as you'll lose the attention of your teens if your booktalk is longer than 60 seconds. As the longest of the BEMT techniques, and for copyright purposes, excerpts for *Snap'n Read* need to be as short as possible.

BEMT Technique #6: *Power-Full Points*

Book covers visually pique interest and entice readers to notice a book. Thus, presenting a full booktalk repertoire as a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation allows for readers to become acquainted with various texts. *Power-Full Points* (fig. 5) is useful when addressing large audiences, such as school assemblies, colleagues at professional development workshops or seminars, or college groups. This technique is also useful because your books are on a USB drive or in the cloud, as opposed to having to physically carry books.

To get the most out of using presentation technology for booktalking, it is important to choose attractive, colorful book covers arranged clearly throughout the slides. Librarians have been using GoodReads as a reliable shareable source for book cover images on the Internet,[xxxviii] and author websites usually have images of their books' covers that can be copied. Book cover
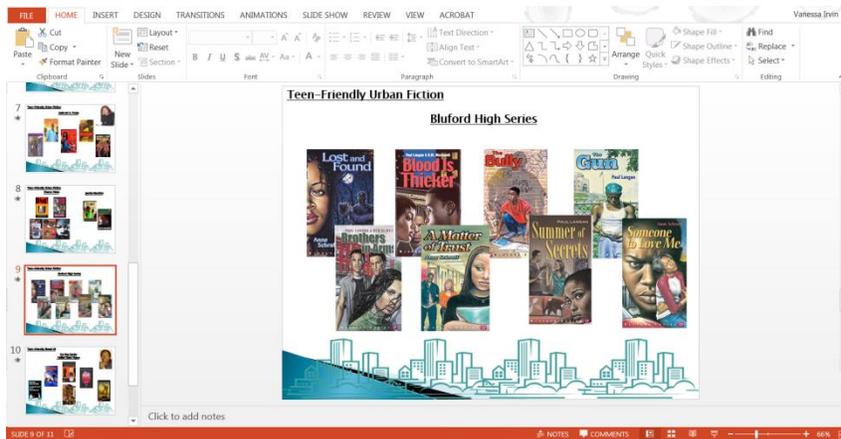
images for the purposes of commentary, review, or criticism only are usually covered by the Fair Use clause of the U.S. Copyright law.[xxxix]

Some best practices for effective *Power-Full Points* include (a) featuring keywords under select book cover images to prompt your memory about the book and to allow your audience something to cognitively engage them; (b) animating the entry of the book covers for pacing and visual appeal; and (c) arranging slides by genre for themed presentations. You can cover a lot of books using *Power-Full Points* because one slide can illustrate one theme. This technique satisfies kinesthetic as well as cognitive developmental needs of teen audiences, and the visual impact of a well-done *Power-Full Points* booktalk cannot be denied, as readers are easily engaged with the visual impact of the presentation (especially when combined with *Book Tweets*).

Discussion

The key to effective booktalking for twenty-first-century teen readers requires creative, yet impactful brevity. Because teens are such intense multitaskers, developmentally compatible booktalks can appeal to their intrinsic need for concise engagement to a variety of reading materials. Teaching pre-service YA librarians how to create these kinds of developmentally friendly booktalks has been challenging because as adults, we librarians are accustomed to writing book reviews, rather than employing more creative practices into composing professional booktalks. I've had LIS students pensively inquire, "We're free to *creatively* write the booktalk?" "Shouldn't this booktalk be longer?" "Just mention the first names of the characters?" I always remind student librarians that it is not about what we as adults prefer or want or are used to reading or hearing, but it is about what the teen reader wants and needs, *and* what and how they can hear, visualize, and articulate those wants and needs.

As noted, these BEMT techniques are really meant to be performed, rather than written. Of course, you'll need to compose your booktalks in order to articulate them, but once you have them written in your own professional notes for practice, it is really the *live performance* of them that brings them to life. In this digital age where teens are pretty much attached to social media interactions, it will be refreshing and challenging for them to interact with you as you perform these developmentally, socially, and cognitively appropriate booktalking techniques.

The key to embracing the BEMT techniques includes best practices such as writing out and rehearsing the booktalk, building a booktalk repertoire that includes a variety of the techniques, and being willing to perform the booktalks on video and in person. Potential for the ongoing professional practice of the BEMT techniques can involve compiling booktalks into a blog site

on Tumblr or Blogger, or perhaps creating Snapchat booktalks, or posting *Book Tweets* on Twitter or Instagram, and perhaps creating a Facebook page that features just the booktalks in multimedia format (images, videos, book trailers, etc.).

There is plenty of room for ethnographic research that gathers data on teen responses to BEMT techniques. In my LIS classes, my goal was to get student librarians comfortable enough to enjoy creatively writing short booktalks and feeling confident to present them in print as well as online via video. Future research will involve interviewing librarian alumni to learn if and how successfully they are employing the BEMT techniques.

My experiential evidence is the result of teen feedback when I would perform the techniques for them. My test groups were my core teens at the public library when I was on the front lines and in the LIS classroom. These informal focus groups were urban-based, crossing broad lines of academic achievement, cultural backgrounds, reading interests, and gender identities. The students attended a variety of public and parochial middle and high schools. One example of the most recent teen feedback I received was pertaining to the *Book Tweets* technique, which I originally called the *Book Whisper* to convey the catchiness of the quick booktalk as well as its intent to generate interest and intrigue for a book. However, it was teens who made it clear that the label *Book Tweets* was more appealing and relatable to them because they are very active on Twitter and quickly understood from that context that the booktalk would be quick and informative.

> Based on my research, the preferred order of the BEMT techniques is as follows:
> 1) *Book Tweets*
> 2) *Snap'n Read*
> 3) *Wrap Back and Open End*
> 4) *Graphic Form*
> 5) *Power-Full Points*

Given the research discussed, it is clear why *Book Tweets* are the preferred booktalk method. Additionally, teens love to be read to; they really do. They enjoy it especially when the read-aloud is short and concise with a book excerpt that is intriguingly informative, dramatic, or suspenseful. I believe this is why *Snap'n Read* is a highly favored BEMT technique. My student librarians have experienced the *Snap'n Read* as a teen favorite as well, and in response to this preference, they made the mistake of creating repertoires that involved a lot of *Snap'n Reads* that were often too long with perhaps use of one other technique, such as the *Book Tweet*. (I must caution that I believe that the reason teens like *Snap'n Read* is because it is used *the least* within a good booktalk repertoire, thus it stands out.)

It has been my observation and experience that with booktalking, teens do not like spoilers. This is why the *Wrap Back* and *Open End* techniques are popular, as these techniques raise interest (*Wrap Back*), intrigue (*Open End*), and relatability (both), without giving away too much of the plot or conclusion.[xl] Meanwhile, *Book Tweets* and *Graphic Form* are the booktalks that get teen readers the most actively engaged in your presentation. As you present your booktalks, you should pass books around to audience members so that they can have a kinesthetic experience

with the book as well. And lastly, while the *Power-Full Points* technique is the least favorite among small groups of teens (merely because it reminds them of school!), it is highly effective for booktalks in a large group setting for high school and college-aged audiences.

Conclusion

The BEMT techniques are effective tools that are fun to create, practice, and perform for teen readers and audiences. Today's combined adolescent developmental factors of (1) impatience for delayed gratification, (2) multitasking literacy skills, and (3) nonstop technological connection call for concise, impactful booktalks with today's teen readers. The value of this work is to document and convey the importance for booktalking to become compatible with current teen literacy practices that are invariably fast-paced, concise, and multimodal.

The BEMT techniques are brief reading adverts that can be performed to appeal to the ways that teens see, hear, and interact in the world. While adolescent developmental and LIS research concepts, along with preliminary feedback from informal teen focus groups, provide a foundation upon which the BEMTs have been created and refined, ethnographic research is needed to substantiate the effectiveness of the techniques across sociocultural contexts. As YA librarians enjoy the contribution of the BEMTs to creating short, quick, punchy, and tech-friendly booktalks, they will experience teen readers with a genuinely sustained interest in librarians, library materials, and, most of all, reading.

Notes

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[iii] Ibid.

[iv] Hill, "The World of Multitasking Teens"; Kristen Purcell et al., "How Teens Do Research in the Digital World," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, November 1, 2012, http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/01/how-teens-do-research-in-the-digital-world/ (accessed June 11, 2015).

[v] Nancy Foasberg, "Student Reading Practices in Print and Electronic Media," *College & Research Libraries* 75, no. 5 (September 2014): 705–23, doi:10.5860/crl.75.5.705; Donald J. Leu et al., "What Is New about the New Literacies of Online Reading Comprehension?" in

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[vi] Sheryl G. Feinstein, *Secrets of the Teenage Brain: Research-Based Strategies for Reaching and Teaching* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013).

[vii] Melanie D. Koss, "Use YA Literature to Harness Adolescents' Digital Media Skills," *Reading Today* 30, no. 1 (August/September 2012): 39–40.

[viii] Purcell et al., "How Teens Do Research in the Digital World."

[ix] Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown, "Articulating a Book's Appeal," *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1997).

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[xi] International Reading Association, *Adolescent Literacy Report: A Position Statement of the International Reading Association*, revised 2012, www.reading.org/Resources/ResourcesbyTopic/Adolescent/Overview.aspx (accessed June 25, 2015).

[xii] David W. Moore, Thomas W. Bean, Deanna Birdyshaw, and James A. Rycik, "Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 43, no. 1 (1999): 97–112; cited in International Reading Association, *Adolescent Literacy Report*, revised 2012.

[xiii] International Reading Association, *Adolescent Literacy Report*.

[xiv] Deborah Brandt, "Accumulating Literacy: Writing and Learning to Write in the Twentieth Century," *College English* 57, no. 6 (1995): 649–68, http://dx.doi.org /10.2307/378570, inDaniel Keller, *Chasing Literacy: Reading and Writing in an Age of Acceleration* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014).

[xv] Keller, *Chasing Literacy*.

[xvi] Ibid.

[xvii] Hill, "The World of Multitasking Teens," 34.

[xviii] Koss, "Use YA Literature to Harness Adolescents' Digital Media Skills"; Prezi is a web-based presentation software platform (https://prezi.com/) popular with many educators.

[xix] Hill, "The World of Multitasking Teens," 34.

[xx] Daniel Romer, "Adolescent Risk Taking, Impulsivity, and Brain Development: Implications for Prevention," *Developmental Psychobiology* 52, no. 3 (2010): 263–76.

[xxi] Ibid.

[xxii] Ibid., 274.

[xxiii] Purcell et al., "How Teens Do Research in the Digital World," 2 of 8.

[xxiv] Ibid., 5 of 8.

[xxv] Margaret A. Berg, "On the Cusp of Cyberspace: Adolescents' Online Text Use in Conversation," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 54, no. 7 (April 2011): 485–93, doi:10.1598/JAAL.54.7.2.

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[xxvii] Michael Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010).

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[xxix] Mary E. Reynolds and Jenny Givens, "Presentation Rate in Comprehension of Natural and Synthesized Speech," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 92, no. 3 (2001): 958–68.

[xxx] Carl Pickhardt, *Surviving Your Child's Adolescence: How to Understand and Even Enjoy the Rocky Road to Independence* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2010); Romer, "Adolescent Risk Taking, Impulsivity, and Brain Development"; Search Institute, *40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents* (www.search-institute.org), 2015.

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xxxv Stenström, *Teenage Talk*; Stenström, Andersen, and Hasund, *Trends in Teenage Talk*.

xxxvi For young adult literature, I call any book that is beyond the context of a standard prose book as "alternate format." This includes graphic novels, epistolary novels, novels in verse, poetry, and unusual formats like the film script format of Walter Dean Myers's *Monster* (1999).

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xl Case in point, I recently performed an *Open End* for a teen reader, and when I finished, her eyes were wide open and she said, "So what happened?!?" I answered with a smile, "You have to read the book!" This exchange is evidence of how the BEMT techniques can draw teen readers into the story and get them involved with meaningful literary discourse and critical thinking, which is important for healthy cognitive development and social interaction for teens.