

Talking To Librarians: An Interview With Two YA Film Selectors

Conducted By Becky Harris

To get a practical look at young adult film collections, we asked two Halifax Public Library film selectors to discuss their collections. **Alison**

Creech, Youth Services Librarian at the Alderney Gate branch selects junior and young adult non-feature and anime films. **Denise Somers**, Adult Services Librarian at Alderney Gate selects young adult and adult feature films.

Q. Why do you think it's important to include young adult films in your collection?

A&D: Young adults are part of the community that we serve. They are a distinct user group with widely varying interests. Collections are developed to meet the needs and interests of the communities which the library serves, and this includes young adults.

Q. How much cross-over is there between young adult and adult films?

A&D: A lot! In fact, you could almost combine the two into one collection. Many feature films have an appeal that includes both young adults and adults. There are very few films that appeal only to the traditional definition of Young Adult

that tends to be used in most of our branches (i.e. teens only).

One issue that I should probably mention here is that we have different loan periods in the library for YA DVDs vs adult DVDs. YA DVDs circulate for 7 days while adult DVDs circulate for 3 days. We have a policy that we won't have copies of the same title with different loan periods, because it causes confusion for borrowers, and DVD overdues are higher than book overdues, so confusion isn't a good thing! Anyway, because of this, we can't purchase copies of a single title for both YA and Adult collections. This means that unless a movie has limited appeal to YA's only, it will end up being catalogued in the Adult collection.

Q. Do you separate the young adult film collection from the adult films? Why or why not?

A&D: This is something that is determined by each branch individually. Interestingly, we were at a meeting of branch librarians last week, and I asked them this question. Many don't separate YA and Adult feature film collections, because of the large amount of crossover, although most do separate children's DVDs from Adult and YA.

Here at Alderney Gate, we do separate them because we have two floors, one for Adult material and one for Children's and Young Adult. Most of the branches that didn't separate collections were smaller branches where the two collections would have been physically located quite close to each other anyway. Would we separate them at Alderney Gate if we didn't have separate floors? I'm not sure, but I think I'd certainly be inclined to shelve them together.

One other issue for DVD collections is the fact that we as a library have to abide by the classifications that the Film Classification department of the provincial Alcohol and Gaming Authority put onto films, just as video stores and movie theatres do. This means that a film with a Restricted rating couldn't be checked out by a child (0-13) or youth (14-17) library card.

Q. How do you decide which films to order?

A&D: Selection is based on demand and reviews. Feature film selection is slightly different from book selection in that films have had theatrical release or television release before the DVD release, so that can often give an indication of what demand will be for an item - if it did well in the theatres, then it will probably do well in the library on DVD. Suggestion for Purchase forms (submitted online at <http://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/readerscafe/suggest.html>) allow patrons to

suggest titles for purchase, which are then considered by the appropriate selector.

Q. What selection materials do you use?

A&D: Selection for films is largely based on catalogues, the same catalogues that video stores order from. The catalogue information is supplemented with reviews from various sources, including the Internet (IMDB and Amazon, for example). For anime (and a large portion of our YA DVD collections are anime), there are other sites that are also useful sites, such as www.animenewsnetwork.com, for example. Annual lists from journals such as *SLJ*, or lists like the American Film Institute's 100 Best Movies list can also be useful for selection.

Q. Do you consult with young adults themselves? If so, how?

A&D: Not directly as selectors. However, many suggestion for purchase forms are submitted by YA borrowers every month. And we receive feedback from branches on a regular basis as well. If staff members are unable to find specific titles for patrons, then those titles are noted and passed on to selectors as gaps.

Q. What film formats do you order (e.g. exclusively DVDs)?

A&D: DVD only--video hasn't been purchased for three years now, I think.

Q. Has HPL considered offering movie downloads from the library website (like New York Public Library does, for example)? What are the challenges? Is this something you think HPL will do in the future?

DL: We don't usually jump on the bandwagon for any new formats until they have been tested by other libraries - too great a risk. I am very familiar with the products. Most libraries that offer movie downloads do so with Overdrive. We are looking into Overdrive (for ebooks and downloadable audio), but if we do go ahead with them, it won't be movies right away. For the most part, the movies that are currently available for download are not very popular. It is on the horizon, and something that I am sure we will move toward, but I would hesitate to put a date to it.

**We called on Debbie LeBel, Collection Development Manager of Halifax Public Libraries to answer this question.*

Q. What challenges do you face in selecting young adult films?

A&D: For all DVDS, demand greatly outpaces the budget. DVDs have long, long waiting lists. We have instituted a browsing DVD collection,

where some copies of DVDs can't be placed on hold, so that popular titles will actually be available in-branch.

The overlap between YA and Adult feature films is also a challenge. This is the reason that one selector is currently looking after both areas. Because of our policy of not having copies of the same title with different loan periods, all copies of a title must be either YA or Adult. Often they will end up in adult, unless they are only of appeal to YA. So things like *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, or *High School Musical* will end up in YA, while *Casino Royale*, despite the wide appeal it has for teens, would end up in adult. Often, this means that our YA collection is a very young collection, almost more of a "tween" collection, with the exception of the anime.

Also, YA films and TV shows may have a very brief window of popularity, and it's important as a selector to try and stay on top of current trends. It's also important to realise when trends are over, so that you can keep your existing collection up to date.

Q. What, if any, censorship issues do you face?

A&D: Generally, censorship issues would be dealt with at the branch level. We do have a Collection Development Policy that includes the CLA Statement on Intellectual Freedom that li-

brarians can refer patrons to if such issues arise. Censorship Issues around YA films, while not common, generally deal with a patron who feels that a YA DVD should not be in the YA collection. Sometimes, this has resulted in a movie being moved to the adult collection. This would not, however, prevent a YA patron from borrowing the item, unless it was rated as Restricted by the province of Nova Scotia.

Q. What are the most popular film genres for young adults currently?

A&D: Anime seems to be hugely popular right now. Some other popular genres would include horror, comedy, and action. Our patrons, of all ages, have wide ranging tastes, so we see all sorts of DVDs circulating.

Q. What are some popular film titles for young adults currently?

A&D: Well, a lot of the film titles that are popular with teens are titles that we would have in our adult collection, the same film titles that are popular with adults. If you're looking for titles that are only popular with teens, that would include things like *High School Musical* (and other Disney channel movies), *Eragon*, and a whole variety of anime titles.

Q. How popular is the young adult film collection?

A&D: It's hard to tell. Many films with YA appeal end up in the adult collection. Anime however, is very, very popular right now, and the majority of our anime titles are in the YA collection.

Q. Does HPL offer any programming related to teens and film? If so, what type? How successful has it been?

A&D: The library doesn't do a large amount of programming related to teens and films. Different branches do film screenings, mostly of NFB features, some of which would have appeal to teens. And some branches have done digital filmmaking workshops for teens in the past. Check out <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKivbY-xYoE> for the results of a workshop for kids and young teens done at one of our branches!

Q. Is there anything else you think I should know?

A&D: We both really enjoy selecting DVDs!