

Advice from a teen magazine guru (well, close enough)

by Robin Illsley

Q. Every time we get a new *Seventeen* magazine, the pin-up pictures in the middle get torn out, or the entire magazine disappears. What can the library do to keep our teen magazines intact?

A. This is a common issue with high-interest items such as teen magazines. Don't sit back and accept that the magazines will be damaged and/or stolen. The library has a responsibility to put its money to good use. While you can't be too militant about preserving the magazines, there are a few simple steps to make them last a bit longer. One option is to keep the current issue(s) of popular magazines behind the reference desk. This may make teens think twice about the magazines value. Another option is to encourage other teens to pressure their friends into respecting the library's magazines. Peer pressure is known to work quite well! An interesting method you may want to test out is to get to the pull-out posters before the teens do. You can use the posters to adorn your teen space, or as prizes for programming activities. Think about the magazines as serving an immediate interest, not necessarily as part of the permanent collection. A tattered magazine is evidence of your remarkable selection skills. Some small comfort can be taken in the fact that you're selecting the magazines that girls love.

Q. I'm hopelessly lost when it comes to what's popular with teens. This makes it difficult to judge what magazines will be popular. How can I stay on top of current teen trends?

A. One great way to know what teens like is to ask them. You can start up a casual conversation, or distribute a paper or online survey. Sure, what they like will change frequently, so be prepared to be ordering and canceling new magazines each year. Also, the magazines have to keep up with current trends themselves to keep their readers interested. If you browse some teen magazines, it'll be pretty easy to judge what teens are into! Another way to stay on top of teen favorites is to visit your local magazine stores. The magazines displayed at these stores are likely the ones teens are buying.

