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Teenagers in Worcester, Telford and Cannock will be taking control of their local libraries next month with live performances to re-imagine libraries, storytelling and the place these have in society.

Through a project supported by Arts Connect and ASCEL West Midlands called 'A Place Free of Judgement', teenagers have been working with artists Blast Theory and author Tony White to reimagine the role of libraries as cultural centres and explore the power of storytelling. The stories, which have been developed from the workshops, will be told in three consecutive performances which will be streamed live on the project's [website](#) from 3pm to midnight Saturday 29th October 2016.

The "ambitious and fun" nine-hour takeover of the three libraries will start in Telford from 3pm to 6pm, then Cannock from 6pm to 9pm and ending in Worcester from 9pm to midnight.

According to the organisers: "This ground breaking project forges a new approach to collaborative arts engagement between artists, teenagers, audiences and local authorities. The role of libraries is under scrutiny and this project shows how they are evolving: taking risks to inspire visitors to think differently about the world around them."

Ju Row Farr, artist with Blast Theory, said: "They have driven stories in challenging directions. They are hilarious one minute and moving the next. The teenagers stake out the power of books, stories and libraries in our lives."

White said: "It has been an incredible privilege to work with really inspiring and creative young people in Cannock, Telford, Worcester, and beyond, and I've learned a huge amount from all involved. When so many libraries are closing and under threat, I'm glad to have seen again first-hand the vital role that libraries and librarians play for young people today, and to have been reminded of just how important my local library was to me when I was their age. With A Place Free of Judgement, I feel that we are giving something back, and I hope people enjoy it."

The project is being delivered by a partnership of six library services as part of the ASCEL national membership network. Blast Theory and White have been in residence in three libraries, one in each local authority area of Staffordshire's Cannock Library, Telford & Wrekin's Southwater One and Worcestershire's St John's Library. In addition, library services in Solihull, Dudley and Shropshire are working with groups of young people to take part in the project online.

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