

MakerSpace: Benefits of Adding it to your Library

Why Add This to Your Collection?

Libraries have always been, and continue to be, repositories of information. Currently, we are drowning in information. Libraries continue to be places that can help to navigate, determine worth and authenticity of the content. Society has never needed its librarians, and libraries, more.

Information, and the consumption of it, is changing at an extraordinary rate. Libraries are necessary to help society adapt.

Information does not just reside in books or the internet but is the sharing of skills and ideas.

The quilting circles of the past have become the Maker Spaces of the present. Providing the space and resources to do this is something libraries can offer their patrons.

What is a Maker Space?

A Maker Space is a place with tools for the community to use as well as a skill space. They provide opportunities for people to create content as well as to consume it.

Makerspace: A community workshop where people gather to build and strengthen things together with common materials. (Interview with Jeff Sturges in ALA Tech Source. February 15th, 2012).

Public libraries, as places that provide free education and resources for all, represent the commitment of a community to their future.

Fundamentally, maker spaces are a technological leap past library knitting and quilting circles, where patrons and experts have often come together to learn new techniques and train others in a skill. The new tools are a lot flashier, and certainly more expensive than a needle and thread. The cost factor is what makes a maker space so appealing to library visitors – what one person cannot afford to purchase for occasional use, the library can buy and share with the community. (“Manufacturing Makerspaces” from American Libraries Posted 02/06/2013)

Benefits

Encourage users to come to the library to seek resources to create projects. Maker Spaces provide information and tools that would otherwise be inaccessible to many. It is a source of information generated from a variety of sources, including other patrons.

Many libraries across the US have developed maker spaces – places to create, build and craft – and they are experiencing increased visits and demand as a result. For public libraries, they are places to promote community engagement. For academic libraries, they are places where students and faculty feel welcome to do classwork and research. (“Manufacturing Makerspaces” from American Libraries Posted 02/06/2013)

Things to Consider

Maker Spaces are noisy, messy places brimming with ideas and creations. Think about where the space might be most appropriate for your particular library.

Offer kits to be stored on shelves and check out, classes and workshops as well as a space for people to meet , create and share ideas and information.

Connect with local resources, businesses and experts. Businesses can provide tangible resources to create things. This builds partnerships in the community and encourages more people to frequent their stores and the library. The synergy will be infectious for the community.

Local experts can share their knowledge. The open source or maker movement is rooted in the sharing of ideas to encourage growth of new ones. Look for these types of resources: Software Engineers, Hardware Engineers, Artists, Game Designers, Scientists, Teachers, Filmmakers, Roboticists, Rocket Scientists, Librarians, Executives, Entrepreneurs, Crafters of all kinds. This diversity of talents and interests can offer advice and resources.

The programs related to Maker Spaces appeal to people of all ages. It is a great way to have the whole library participate in a new area of growth. Provide a place where people can both learn, and make, new things. They can work through projects while learning new skills through workshops and collaboration.

Consider developing a name for your Maker Space, and associated kits and workshops. You could also create a logo to accompany it. This will help to create interest from the community and will help in publicizing events.

More Information

A guide to Maker Spaces just for Librarians:

<http://oedb.org/ilibrarian/a-librarians-guide-to-makerspaces/>