

Client Report

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Christopher Skipper

Valdosta State University

**Executive Summary:**

Since their inception, makerspaces have been valued as a place for exploration, collaboration, problem solving, and education. Research indicates that makerspaces are not just a one-time investment, rather, they require an ongoing commitment on the part of library staff.

The client is a library manager at a public library and oversees children and teen services. The client's public library branch operates as a Joint-Use public/academic library, which requires some consideration in approaching the client's problem.

Client posed a question regarding the best practices and technology for public library digital media labs. This presented as a problem which required evaluation of the current practices and offerings of the existing media lab, as well as a review of other technologies and practices that other libraries are using. The digital media lab is accessible by both public library patrons and college affiliated patrons, which allows for wider considerations.

This report focuses on solutions for improving the library's existing digital media lab in alignment with other public or academic library offerings. The abbreviation "DML" will be used in this report to represent "digital media lab."

**Identified Issues:**

- DML Space – The current space for the DML is small and limits expansion possibilities. How can we create a more flexible space?
- DML Technology - What technology could improve the DML?
- DML Programming – What programs and events could we hold?

**Short-Term Recommendations:**

- Survey Staff and Customers – Determine what types of technology and crafts that staff want to offer, and customers want to experience.
- Plan New Programs and Events in Flexible Spaces

**Long-Term Recommendations:**

- Develop and Strengthen Partnerships
- Assess Possible Sources of Funding (Grants) /\*Demco\*/

## **Explanation of Short-Term Recommendations:**

### **Survey Staff and Customers**

*In Sustaining Library Makerspaces: Perspectives on Participation, Expertise, and Embeddedness*, the revitalization of “stagnant” or declining makerspaces is addressed. Regarding sustaining a makerspace, Einarsson posits “It becomes a concern for the sustainability of the space if tools are not aligned with the needs of the community and practitioners’ expertise” (Einarsson, 2021) This people first approach is also discussed in *Make labs, not war: Rethinking library creative technology services through a critical making lens*. The authors of this article state that “By centering people over technology, libraries can offer inclusive and thoughtful creative technology spaces that are consistent with the profession’s values which will better serve patrons.” (Ippoliti et al., 2020) The Robert B. Greenblatt Library University Library Makerspace Proposal defines a makerspace as a space in which “The space and equipment are determined by the needs of the user.” (Mears et al., 2017)

These statements indicate that the long-term success of a library makerspace requires a library to consider the needs of the community it serves. Purchasing new equipment for a makerspace is expensive and Einarsson introduces two ways that equipment is usually purchased to address the need for new technology. A tool-first approach – in which a library acquires machinery and expects that users will want to experiment with it, or an activity-first approach, in which a library conducts activities and then acquires the machinery after participation is proven. (Einarsson, 2021)

The first step in determining which technologies are valued and of interest to the community is to reach out to the community directly. Makerspaces require more than just a space; they also require a staff that is trained to use the equipment and willing to assist patrons with exploring the new technology. In this respect, it is important that the staff also have a say in the recommendations of new technology for makerspace programs. *The ‘stone soup’ approach to creating a library makerspace* discusses how the library sent out a “Makerspace Wishlist” to a faculty, staff, and donors' newsletter. (Markgraf & Hillis, 2021) This idea of creating a wishlist stands out as an excellent way to survey the customers that use the makerspace as well as the staff. Posting a blank wishlist to staff areas as well as in the DML allows staff and customers to document their ideas for improving their library makerspace experience.

### **Plan New Programs and Events in Flexible Spaces**

Caso discusses the library makerspace as both a creative space and as an innovative space. They consider these spaces to be “performative” spaces in which “library concepts that promote social encounter, discovery, and the public sphere, where (literacy in) digitization and new media increasingly occupies a relevant position.” Caso further notes that as making culture becomes further embedded into libraries “its implication cannot be limited to certain selected areas (fabrication) or confined in a room (an average makerspace) but they should more deeply inform the relationships between people and activities, people and spaces/places and people among each other.” (Caso, 2019)

The existing library makerspace is a small room that has a capacity of five people. These spatial limitations currently pose a barrier as to the types of library programs that can be held.

One suggestion is to explore the use of a more flexible space, which will require more mobility to the makerspace equipment. This mobility can be as simple as finding a cart to move the equipment to a more open space in the library, or by investing in equipment to create a truly mobile makerspace.

*Making on the Move: Mobility, Makerspaces, and Art Education* details the practices of a deployable makerspace. The mobility of the makerspaces allows for resource sharing, which in turn results in fewer budgetary limitations. The MAKE 3D trailer offers different programs based on the type of equipment that they fill the trailer with. The trailer can be moved to nontraditional spaces, thereby increasing engagement with those that may not know that makerspaces are a library offering. Since the materials inside of the makerspace trailer are configurable, the programs can be separated into different modules to focus on various aspects of the making process. (Jordan et al., 2020)

A flexible or more open space for a library makerspace is not enough to increase participation alone. Participation requires activities and activities require planning. Einarsson posits that library makerspaces should continuously direct and redirect their activities towards what attracts users. Some examples include community evenings for experienced makers, collaboration with schools, and weekend activities for families. Einarsson also states that “short-term workshops are aimed at fun and social experiences that might recruit users, whereas community-driven activities can sustain user interests and learning processes over a longer period of time.” (Einarsson, 2021) The Public Library Association website provides several articles and resources for programming, marketing, and community engagement. (Public Library Association, 2016)

### **Explanation of Long-Term Recommendations:**

#### **Develop and Strengthen Partnerships**

The success of an idea requires knowledge of its existence. If people are unaware that something exists, then it simply does not exist in their minds. Advertising is a crucial tool for relaying the existence of ideas to the general public. For libraries, advertising their resources is not only a way to potentially increase the usage of resources, but also a way to gain the interest of potential partners. Hudson County Community College, for example, generated awareness of their library makerspace by advertising it in all flyers and promotional materials. (Wilkins and DeLooper, 2021)

*The ‘stone soup’ approach to creating a library makerspace* details the methods that an academic library used to create a makerspace following large budget cuts. The budget cuts made it difficult for the library to succeed on its own, so instead they reached out to other departments for help. By outlining their goals and potential uses of the makerspace equipment, other departments willingly donated extra supplies and equipment to the library. A partnership with the math and art department allowed them to pool funds to purchase a laser cutter, which was mutually beneficial to everyone. (Markgraf and Hillis, 2020)

Wilkins and DeLooper state that one of the most positive aspects of the makerspace was the way it helped the library to develop partnerships. These partnerships helped to further promote programs and provide additional support services. The makerspace allowed the library

to improve its communications with professional organizations and share best practices at state conferences. (Wilkins and DeLooper, 2021)

In the case of a public library makerspace, consideration should be given towards developing partnerships with local schools. With a more mobile makerspace, the library could potentially perform outreach and hold programs in the classrooms.

### **Assess Possible Sources of Funding**

After suffering a 25% reduction in overall funding, the McIntyre Library at the University of Wisconsin needed to influence potential donors to create and maintain an initial library makerspace. The library created a proposal that outlined three different funding packages. These 'packages' comprised of a list of the makerspace equipment and supplies that the library would be able to purchase should they meet that funding goal. Once the library makerspace was established and had proven examples of use, the library collected stories to make more compelling cases to potential donors. As a university library, they were able to entice other departments of the university as well as student groups, reaching an audience that most public libraries do not collaborate with. (Markgraf and Hillis, 2020)

Another university library, the Robert B. Greenblatt, M.D. Library at Augusta University, also created an in depth proposal plan to build and maintain a makerspace. The plan outlines material considerations, equipment, staffing needs, and space requirements. (Mears et al., 2017)

One consideration is the fact that both libraries established task forces that meet to reevaluate the needs of the makerspace over time. These task forces work to establish policies, procedures, and plans for the future of the library makerspace. Assessing sources of funding is another aspect that a task force must consider, and potential sources of funding are unique to each individual library according to their structure and resources. DEMCO is not only a retailer of makerspace equipment, but they also provide free resources for makerspace ideas as well as a grant search function. This grant search can be accessed by scrolling to the bottom of the page (linked in bibliography) and clicking on 'Free Grant Search' under 'Services'. (Demco, 2021)

### **Conclusion:**

Research consistently indicated that the establishment of partnerships was crucial to the existence of library makerspaces. These partnerships provided opportunities for funding, programming ideas, and further integration with parts of the community. By reviewing existing makerspace offerings and creating plans and proposals for the future of the makerspace, the library can appeal to outside organizations and form or improve upon existing partnerships. As evidenced, the improvement of a library makerspace or DML requires consideration of factors that the library may not have control over (such as spatial limitations); however, a library can still take advantage of internal and external resources to develop a makerspace that is not only functional, but also tailored to the needs of the community.



## References

Caso, O. (2019). Public libraries and “Making.” Experiences in the Netherlands. *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes*, 2(2).  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2612-0496/9547>

This article discusses that spaces have on a library makerspace, and the way that a library in the Netherlands has their making spaces arranged.

Einarsson, Á. M. (2021). Sustaining library makerspaces: Perspectives on participation, expertise, and embeddedness. *The Library Quarterly*, 91(2), 172–189.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/713050>

Einarsson discusses several principles for sustaining library makerspaces. Using a people-first approach, Einarsson highlights the need to align makerspace procedures, practices, and future changes to with the needs and desires of the community.

Ippoliti, C., Merkel, K., & Swauger, S. (2020). Make labs, not war: Rethinking library creative technology services through a critical making lens. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 27(2-4), 354–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2021.1908199>

This article introduces the concept of “critical making” in which the exchange of ideas, shared understanding, and communal act of making is more important than the final result of creation. The article emphasizes the importance of centering people over technology to create inclusive creative spaces that will better serve patrons.

Jordan, A., Knochel, A. D., Meisel, N., Reiger, K., & Sinha, S. (2020). Making on the Move: Mobility, Makerspaces, and Art Education. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 40(1), 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12333>

This article discusses the practices of a mobile makerspace. The mobile makerspace separates the making process into different modules in order to more effectively teach the concepts of creation. The mobility of the makerspace allows the library to reach more people in spaces other than the library.

Marcotte, A. (2019, March 1). *Tech trends*. American Libraries Magazine.

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2019/03/01/tech-trends-libraries/>

This article discusses tech trends in public libraries. Virtual Reality, prototyping, digital citizenship, and designing content with Creative Commons 0 licensed material are discussed.

Markgraf, J., & Hillis, D. (2021). The “stone soup” approach to creating a library makerspace.

*College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 27, 1–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2021.1880347>

Markgraf and Hillis explain how a university library, that recently underwent major budget cuts, was able to perform outreach and establish partnerships to build a medium-scale makerspace for their library. The appendix of this article provides a lengthy list of activities that could be held in a makerspace.

Mears, K., Logue, N., & Kouame, G. (2017). *University Libraries Makerspace Proposal*.

This proposal includes recommendations for establishing a makerspace. Included is a floorplan, technology recommendations, and policies and procedures for operating the space.

Wilkins, L., & DeLooper, J. (2021). If you build it, will they come? Reflections on creating a

community college library makerspace. *Public Services Quarterly*, 17(4), 276–285.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2021.1887049>

Wilkins and DeLooper discuss the trial and error of establishing and maintaining a makerspace in a community college setting. The article discusses policies, procedures, and the establishment of partnerships that benefited the library makerspace.

### *Websites*

DEMCO. (n.d.). *Makerspace & STEM Project Kits, Supplies, Storage & More*.

[www.demco.com](http://www.demco.com). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from

<https://www.demco.com/products/makerspace-stem>

DEMCO is not only a place to purchase makerspace materials, they also have free resources for advice, programming ideas, and even a place to search for grants.

Public Library Association. (2016, June 13). *Makerspaces*. American Library Association.

<https://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/technology/makerspaces>

The Public Library Association has a multitude of resources for library makerspaces. There are dozens of research articles on legal issues, outreach, marketing, and developing makerspaces.