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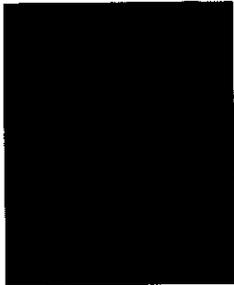
\*INFORMATION resources management

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**Abstract:** The article focuses on public libraries as creative spaces. It states that the ubiquity of the World Wide Web has changed the public's attitude towards public libraries as sources of information. The library can expand its role from a place where information can be acquired to one where it can be created by encouraging the development of creative spaces within its confines. The need for a place to collectively meet and share ideas reportedly becomes essential as the maker community grows.

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## Libraries as Creative Spaces

The space contained within a public library has historically been, and continues to be, dominated by the library's physical collection. However, increasing demand for digital content is in some cases reducing the footprint required to store the library's physical contents. In addition, the ubiquity of the World Wide Web in people's homes and on their mobile devices has changed the model through which the public engages with the library as a source of the information it seeks. The public library as an institution needs to get ready to embrace a future that goes beyond collecting, storing, and sharing books.

Public libraries already offer engagement with items that are not books, such as DVDs, audio CDs, electronic resources, newspapers, and so on. However, the engagement with all these items, as with books, is one in which members play the role of consumer. By encouraging the development of creative spaces within the library, the library expands its role from a place where information can be acquired to one where it can be created, where members are given the opportunity and the tools required to turn ideas and concepts into something tangible.

This article will elaborate on the public library as a creative space by exploring specific examples of libraries establishing programs, services, and infrastructure that support the creative process. These examples show the fostering of creativity through the addition of maker spaces to libraries; the way in which libraries can support the intersection of technology, information, and learning; and finally how the library as a facilitator for micro-publishing can turn the publishing model upside down.

### Libraries as Maker Spaces

The maker movement is centered on the idea of do-it-yourself (or do-it-with-others) technology fabrication. Makers use the abundance of inexpensive circuitry and recyclable components to manufacture innovative and creative technological products.

The idea of including maker space in public libraries has largely been credited to Phillip Torrone of *Make* magazine.<sup>1</sup> Torrone envisions libraries and do-it-yourself fabrication as an ideal pair. The Fayetteville Free Library (FFL) in New York State, one of the first public libraries to include a maker space, has generated far-reaching publicity.<sup>2</sup> The implementation of such a space falls in line not only with the vision of maker advocate Torrone, but also with that of David Lankes, a professor of librarianship at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies.<sup>3</sup> Lankes argues that librarians should not worry about which new technology might kill the public library as an institution. Instead, Lankes makes the case that a lack of imagination among librarians will be the death of libraries. The inclusion of maker spaces within public libraries represents a fostering of imagination and creativity that could serve to reinvent the library.

Bloggers and journalists are claiming that the introduction of maker space into public libraries can return libraries to their purpose as a learning commons.<sup>4</sup> Too often, the library is thought of as an outdated book warehouse, while it used to be considered a place for learning and the exchange of ideas.<sup>5</sup> As the maker community grows, the need for a place to collectively meet and share ideas becomes essential. Public libraries as institutions tasked with serving their communities have the opportunity to create such space.

In an effort to support the learning objectives at universities, maker spaces are being recommended as additions to academic libraries as well.<sup>6</sup> Given the increasing technological complexity of daily life, universities are concerned about a lack of trained engineers and scientists.<sup>7</sup> Maker spaces are seen as a way for students to engage and experiment with technology in creative ways that reinforce theories taught in the classroom.<sup>8</sup> In addition, having hands-on experience in design and fabrication empowers students to become creators who intuitively understand technology.<sup>9</sup>

Although the inclusion of maker spaces in libraries focuses on the physical manifestations of creativity, purely digital creativity should be fostered as well. At a recent TEDxToronto, Ryan Henson Creighton gave a compelling talk about the process and results of co-creating a video game with his five-year-old daughter.<sup>10</sup> The game was created at the Toronto Independent Game Jam at George Brown University in Toronto, which is the kind of creative event that libraries could benefit by being associated with. The game jam is an intersection of technology, information, and learning, and is a reflection of a community desire to be more involved in the creative process and less dependent on the consumer model of the video game industry.

### Libraries as Facilitators of Micropublishing

Related to the concept of libraries as maker spaces is the idea of the library as a facilitator for micropublishing.<sup>11</sup> The traditional model of book publishing requires a writer to find an editor and a publishing house that see value in publishing the manuscript. The backup option for self-publishers, who must pay to print a book through a book printer, is expensive. However, a growing number of public libraries now own book-on-demand printers that can print existing books no longer under copyright, or one-off prints for members of the library.<sup>12</sup> This technology puts the ability to publish books in the hands of the author, empowering creative work and giving voice to those who may otherwise not be heard.<sup>13</sup>

Through the inclusion of maker spaces, creativity events, and self-publishing technologies, public libraries are reaching out to ever-growing segments of their communities. A movement in public libraries to create a learning commons can make the library part of the fabrication renaissance recognized in the maker community. This is the library's opportunity to flourish as a space of inspiration for learners, thinkers, and creators. 🐾

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### Notes

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