

Creating School Library “Makerspace”

by LESLEY PREDDY

STUDENT NEEDS, INTERESTS, talents, and attentions continually evolve. Because of these constantly evolving needs, school librarians have to be adept at creating new ways to connect to students. They must also look for ways to re-envision the facility to better meet learning styles and interests.

LIBRARY AS A DESTINATION

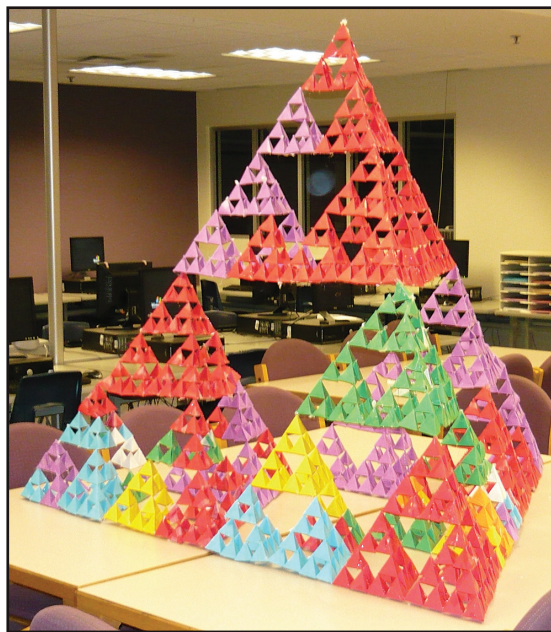
The new focus on participatory learners and more student-led learning has resulted in making the school library a destination. One hot topic hitting public and school libraries is makerspaces where students (and sometimes staff and parents) can create, problem solve, and develop thinking. According the Makerspace Team, the focus of a makerspace is technology-based with an emphasis toward high schools (<http://makerspacedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/makerspaceplaybook-201204.pdf>). The “Makerspace Playbook” describes makerspaces as a “physical mashup” of “the shop class, home economics class, the art studio, and science labs” (Makerspace Team 2012, 5). It can be envisioned as the DIY Network meets the hands-on philosophy of a children’s museum in the school library. Although the original concept was focused on older students, it can be adapted to primary, intermediate, and middle grade school libraries.

This concept may seem overwhelming when space is at a premium in schools, adult supervision is required in all student spaces, expert mentors are needed for certain experiences, money is limited, and student activities must

meet standards. School librarians can still take the plunge, however, even if they are limited by one or all of the above mentioned issues. They can take part in this revolution without a large investment of time, space, or money.

MAKERSPACE

Look around the school library facility and consider how it could be rearranged or the space redistributed to accommodate a unique stationary or mobile makerspace. Make it distinctive through decorations or signage or both. Consider



the purpose while creating the design area. There should be enough space for the activity supplies, instructions, and work area. Remember, this space might need to be autonomously productive and active, so there should be enough supplies laid out to get through the day without direct supervision. Provide seating or standing space for the number of patrons you want or need to use the space at one time and table or countertop room for each person to work. Allow for adequate lighting and electrical outlets. Consider that storage space for supplies could be portable or permanent. The area should be easy to clean after a day of active use. It should be uncomplicated to convert from one activity to the next.

SUPPLIES

Begin collecting random items that others might consider scraps or junk. These items could be future project treasures. Repurposing or recycling will save money and this eclectic assortment will provide inspiration and spontaneity. Com-

mandeer community volunteers to help build the basic store of supplies: PTA/PTO organizations, staff, students, community outreach, and recycle facilities.

Items that are easily adapted to Do It Yourself (DIY) activities might include plastic gift cards, glass jars, puzzle pieces, yarn, felt, stickers, old books, milk cartons, wood scraps, gift wrap, tissue paper, egg cartons, fabric, buttons, and used greeting cards. Look for great seasonal or beginning of the school year deals for markers, pens, pencils, crayons, glue, paper, scissors, and other staples. Depending on the age of the student, the project, and the amount of supervision available, other items might include a microwave, iron, glue guns, cutting mat, trimmer, hammer, mallet, soldering iron, woodburning pen, computer, and color printer. Check local craft and hobby stores for teacher and school discount programs. Grants for start-up materials can also be obtained from local businesses and philanthropic organizations.

GUIDED INSTRUCTION

It is important for students to have creative freedom in this space, but even with artistic flexibility, guidance is needed. Students learn through a range of text, visual, verbal, and kinesthetic clues. Create and display examples of final products for the current makerspace activity. Display instructional signs or papers, including both illustrations or pictures and text. If the school's technology allows, enrich independent learning and understanding by creating a how-to video to play continuously on a laptop or DVD player. Share the activity's objective and standards in a format designated by the school and familiar to students. Provide modeling of ethical information use by including credit within the training material for each activity, even if it is just an "inspired by" reference. Whenever possible, include students in the development and creation of instructional materials.

PATHFINDER

Create a bookmark or index-sized card mini-pathfinder for patrons to take away. Include further ideas for books, websites, and community places or events that participants can do on their own.

ACTIVITIES

Consider that activities can be either group construction or individual make-and-take. A group activity could be creating a giant tetrahedron, constructing a tent-size igloo out of milk cartons, stitching together a patchwork quilt, cooking a no-bake recipe, or working creatively with various types of puzzles, magnetic poetry, or Legos. Simple individual make-and-takes could be bookmarks, jewelry, book covers, pressed flowers, greeting cards, foldables, seasonal ideas, and repurposed/recycled inspirations.

INSPIRATION

A makerspace activity may be an original idea, something shared by somebody else, an idea found in a periodical, book, or website. The inspiration for an activity may come from a lesson plan, holiday, commercial, professional conversation, event in a fictional read, visit to a place, or any number of other, random, everyday experiences. Once underway, inspiration will be found around every corner.

REFERENCES:

Makerspace Team. "Makerspace Playbook: Working Draft." makerspace.com. <http://makerspacedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/makerspaceplaybook-201204.pdf> (accessed October 1, 2012). ◀

GETTING STARTED

Consider the following inspirations for

Makerspaces in your library:

- ▶ The school and local public libraries' collections for books and periodicals on fine arts, crafts, hobbies, science projects, games, etc.
- ▶ Family Fun magazine
- ▶ A nearby hobby store
- ▶ All Free Crafts. <http://www.allfreecrafts.com/kids/index.shtml>
- ▶ Craft Elf. <http://www.craftelf.com/>
- ▶ Hobby Lobby. http://www.hobbylobby.com/project_inspiration/project_inspiration.cfm
- ▶ Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Store. <http://www.joann.com/project-home/>
- ▶ Michaels. <http://www.michaels.com/Projects/projects,default,sc.html>
- ▶ Purdue University-Indiana 4-H. <http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/projects/index.cfm>
- ▶ Spoonful. <http://spoonful.com/>

FOR FURTHER LEARNING

- ▶ Britton, Lauren. "A Fabulous Laboratory." Public Libraries (July/August 2012): 30-33.
- ▶ Maker Librarian: Making the Future, One Library at a Time. <http://www.makerlibrarian.com>
- ▶ Makerspace: Creating a Space for Young Makers and Educators.- <http://makerspace.com/blog/>

Leslie Preddy is the school librarian at Perry Meridian Middle School. She has been awarded the national School Library Media Program of the Year and was a 2010 finalist for Indiana Teacher of the Year. Her books, *Social Readers* (2010) and *SSR with Intervention* (2007) were starred reviewed and are available through Libraries Unlimited.



Copyright of School Library Monthly is the property of ABC-CLIO - Greenwood Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.