

Where ALIA's Research Advisory Committee brings you news from the world of library and information services research.

## FROM OUR COLLECTION:

Loertscher, David V; Preddy, Leslie and Derry, Bill. Maker spaces in the school library learning commons and the uTEC maker model, in *Teacher Librarian*, Vol 41, No 2 (Dec 2013), p 48–51, 67.

Stoltz, Dorothy. A smorgasbord of possibilities, in *Children and Libraries*, Vol 12, No 2, Summer 2014, p 21–25.

# CONNECTING WITH THE NEXT GENERATION

**E**d Kostraby was eager to explore articles on our feature topic this month, but trawling collection databases did not initially reveal the right mix of what he knew was happening in public and school libraries.

From countless readings, I discovered all types of libraries want to engage, to connect, and make the users' experience meaningful, and their connection lifelong. This seems to be a universal given proposition. The need to keep attracting new users and how to achieve this is ongoing. There are articles on the application of mobile technologies, outreach events, patron information seeking habits, special services, flexible spaces, collection management variations – the diversity and range of articles is staggering – and yet finding the essence of attracting the next generation of library lovers was eluding me.

A long term project from Maryland Department of Education Division of Library Development and Services (USA) provides an insight to their collaborative approach, which begins at the preschool level. They argue that this space provides '...the enjoyment of life long learning. Public libraries play a practical and strategic role in the fulfilment of this goal'. I strongly believe we can also see this in our public library efforts in Australia.

The article provides a brief overview on developing the library as a preschool door to learning – connecting to the young as a '... long term investment'. They have escalated their service based on research to '... demonstrate a statistical correlation between the training of adults by librarians and in the improvement of children's early literary skills...', going as far as looking at imaging technology showing brain activity to measure learning and to design environments to accommodate this.

Engagement takes time and effort from all stakeholders; the diversity of library staff skill and dedication to the users, and their connection to many projects, mutates into continual services. This places libraries at the heart of local communities,

strengthening families and the spirit of engagement, including creating early learning spaces to develop a healthy level of user engagement. Expanded services, in combination with educational values, have redefined their space as connectors to a continuum in a young person's life.

Ah, what about the older kids, I sense you thinking. The young progress into formal education and the school library, now becoming the Commons (this is starting to resonate in the literature) and embracing the concept of maker spaces, as Loertscher et al found: '...an evolutionary step in library facilities' design and programming. It is a destination for thinking, learning, doing, creating, producing and sharing: a space that takes advantage of multiple learning styles.'

This is a neat definition from the authors involved in academia, public and school libraries. The authors indicate that this idea expands the library well beyond its understood mental mindsets. The principles of this model are explored in some detail.

Ideas, as presented in maker spaces, have always been part of school libraries – displays, author talks and research lessons and because of the way technology is developing the space is becoming more creative, diverse and engaging a variety of student capacities. The maker space attempts to move the student from a passive user to a skilled thinker and user of all sorts of collaborative enterprises and partnerships in a fast moving school day. Using Bloom's taxonomy, the article strongly makes the argument that this moves the young person from the base level of the scale to its highest level.

This recognises that learning takes many forms and as librarians, and teacher librarians, the care and education of the young is elaborate, continuous and needs spaces to develop connections and a sense of who they are and what they can achieve.

This combines the realm of services and educational values, in some way similar to what Maryland is doing. It is customising to a particular school community of youth.

The article does not explicitly say that maker spaces capture the next generation of library users, but implicitly, it does engage the young – older kids in a reworked space – while at school and is a sure way to keep them connected and creative as lifelong learners. It expands the idea of a school library and hopefully creates powerful webs for the young to embrace and continue into their later lives.

Does this then generate lifelong library lovers? The ideas are not new, but the use of the space, technology, the morphing of ideas is. The library is becoming many things to many people, but what can I say? We will have to wait and see, and by that time the library will again have moved onto its next phase of '...a new step in the evolution of libraries'.

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