Making It At Cornell University Library: Developing the CUL Makerspace

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Makerspaces, sometimes also referred to as hackerspaces, hackspaces, and fablabs are creative spaces where people can gather to create, invent, and learn...


Why in a library?

• Library already a place of knowledge creation
• New technology and new educational curricula break down distinction between thinking, writing and creating physical things

Goals and Development Process

• Surveyed the ‘landscape’ of making at Cornell, in Ithaca & beyond
• Reviewed literature and examples of makerspaces in libraries, esp. at universities
• Developed a spreadsheet of making at Cornell, in Ithaca & beyond

General Findings

• Users in specific programs, classes, organizations already had access to existing makerspaces
• Usually with expert staffing
• Possible open niche in the market for a makerspace for introductory, non-specialist audience

Challenges To Date:

• Time commitment
• Back to the world of ‘stuff’: Equipment wears out, consumables consumed
• Poor attendance at many events
• Steep learning curve for staff
• Difficulty creating new jobs & titles for staff
• Slow process of physical design, safety
• Deep learning curve for staff

Phase 1 (spring 2016): Mobile Makerspace

Phase 2 (fall 2016 - spring 2017): Mann Youfacture "closet" makerspace (Mann = Mann Library)

Phase 3 (late fall 2017): Mann Youfacture permanent makerspace (in process)

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