

The Impact and Value of Makerspaces in Public Libraries

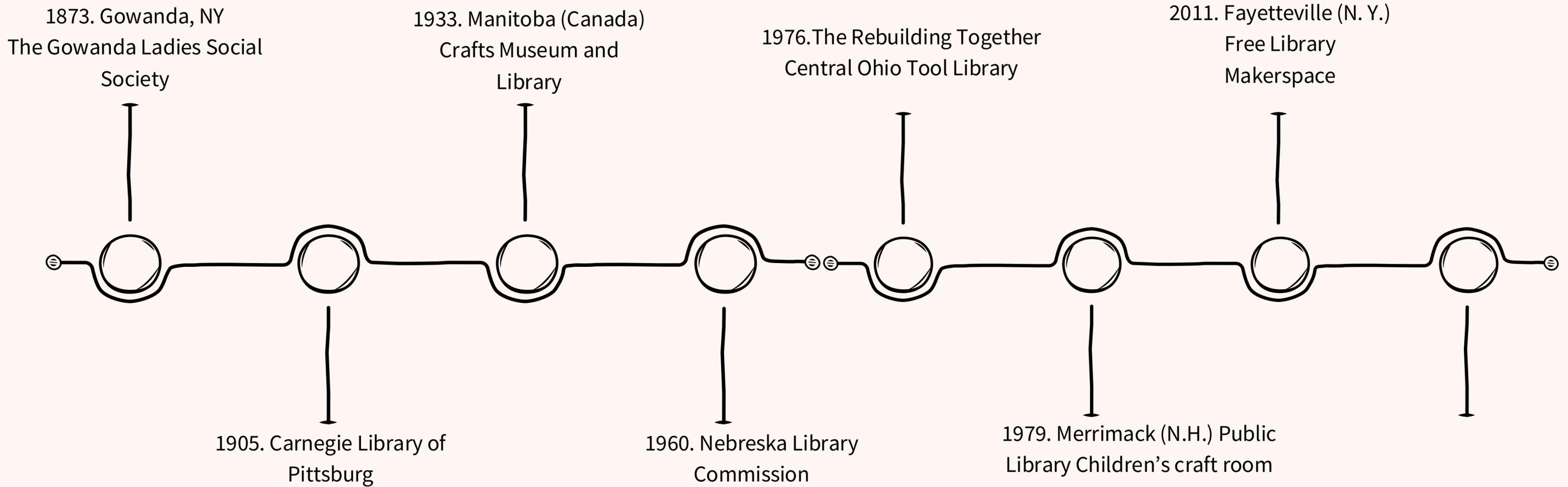
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History of Making in Libraires



Defining Library Makerspaces

Different Forms

Dedicated space, multi-purpose space, mobile, maker programs, events inside and outside of the library, online resources

Digital and Physical Production

Digital media lab? Recording studio?

Low- and High-Tech

Children's craft programming? A machine shop?



Library Makerspace



A library movement that fosters community by bringing diverse people together through hands-on creative activities and the promotion of maker mindsets, incorporating a range of technologies and tools.



Reconceptualizing Today's Libraries: Why Library Makerspace Research Matters

- Deepening our understanding of what today's libraries are about
- How libraries have evolved to meet the needs of rapidly changing technology, society, and its people



MEASURING THE IMPACT AND VALUE OF MAKERSPACES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES



THE TEAM:

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The Project

Research Question

What is the value and impact of public library makerspaces to their organization, community and individuals?

Research Design

- 12 focus group interviews in three library makerspaces in Illinois in December 2021
- 42 users, non-users, teens, and staff



RESEARCH SETTINGS



**Indian Trails
Public Library District**



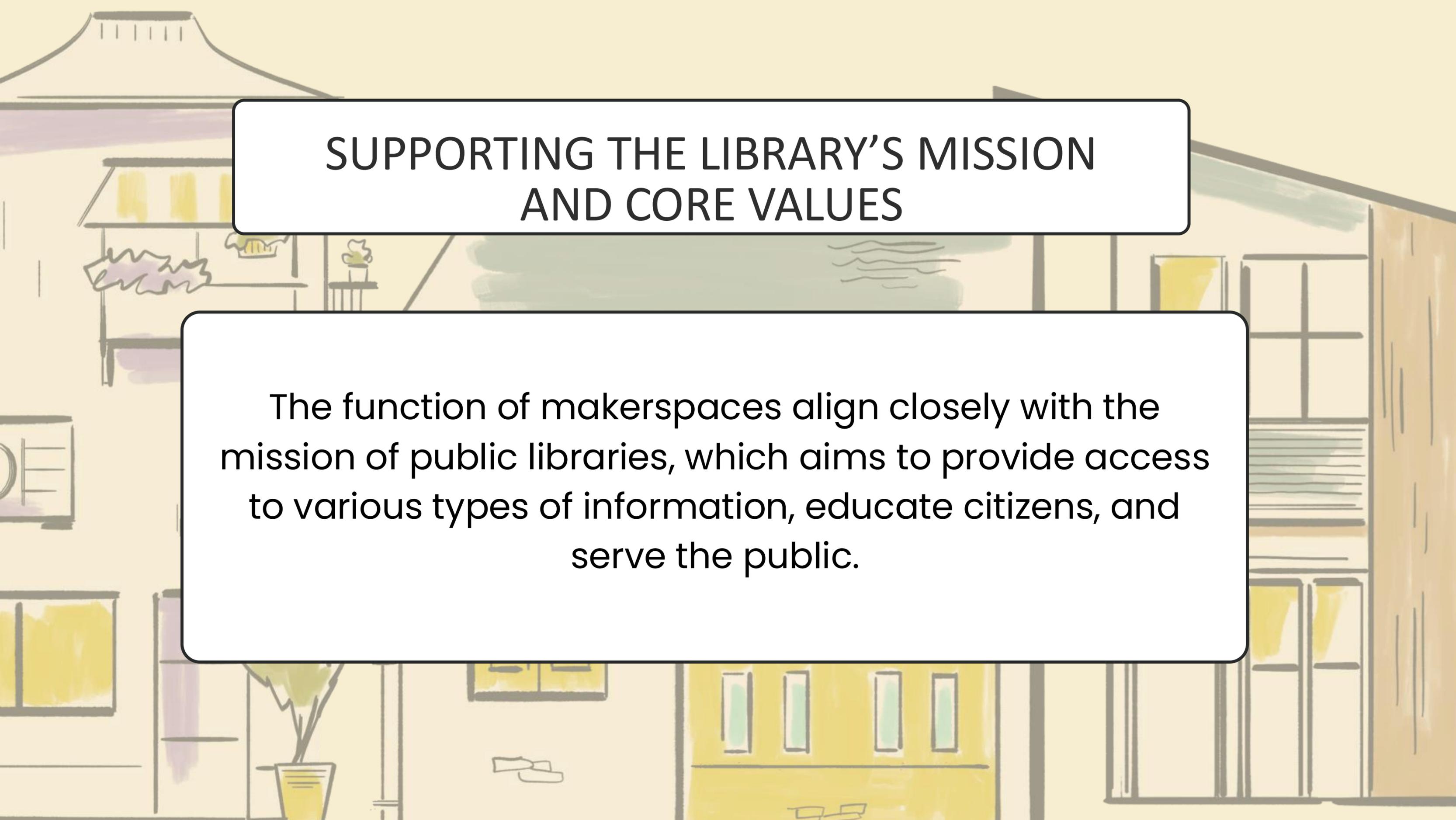
Joliet Public Library



Dekalb Public Library



FINDINGS



SUPPORTING THE LIBRARY'S MISSION AND CORE VALUES

The function of makerspaces align closely with the mission of public libraries, which aims to provide access to various types of information, educate citizens, and serve the public.

ALA Core Values of Librarianship

- **Access**
- **Equity**
- **Public Good**
- Intellectual Freedom and Privacy
- Sustainability



Access

Library makerspaces provide access to tools, spaces, programs, staff expertise, social opportunities and more to their community members

“It's definitely making it more accessible to do things, because a lot of the equipment is very expensive and very hard to get for just a family; so this makes it a lot easier to do things.”



Equity

- *Interviewer: What might be lost if the library did not have a makerspace?*
- *Community Member: The diversity of the people, because all different ethnicities come down here...**The camaraderie of the community** and the different people.*

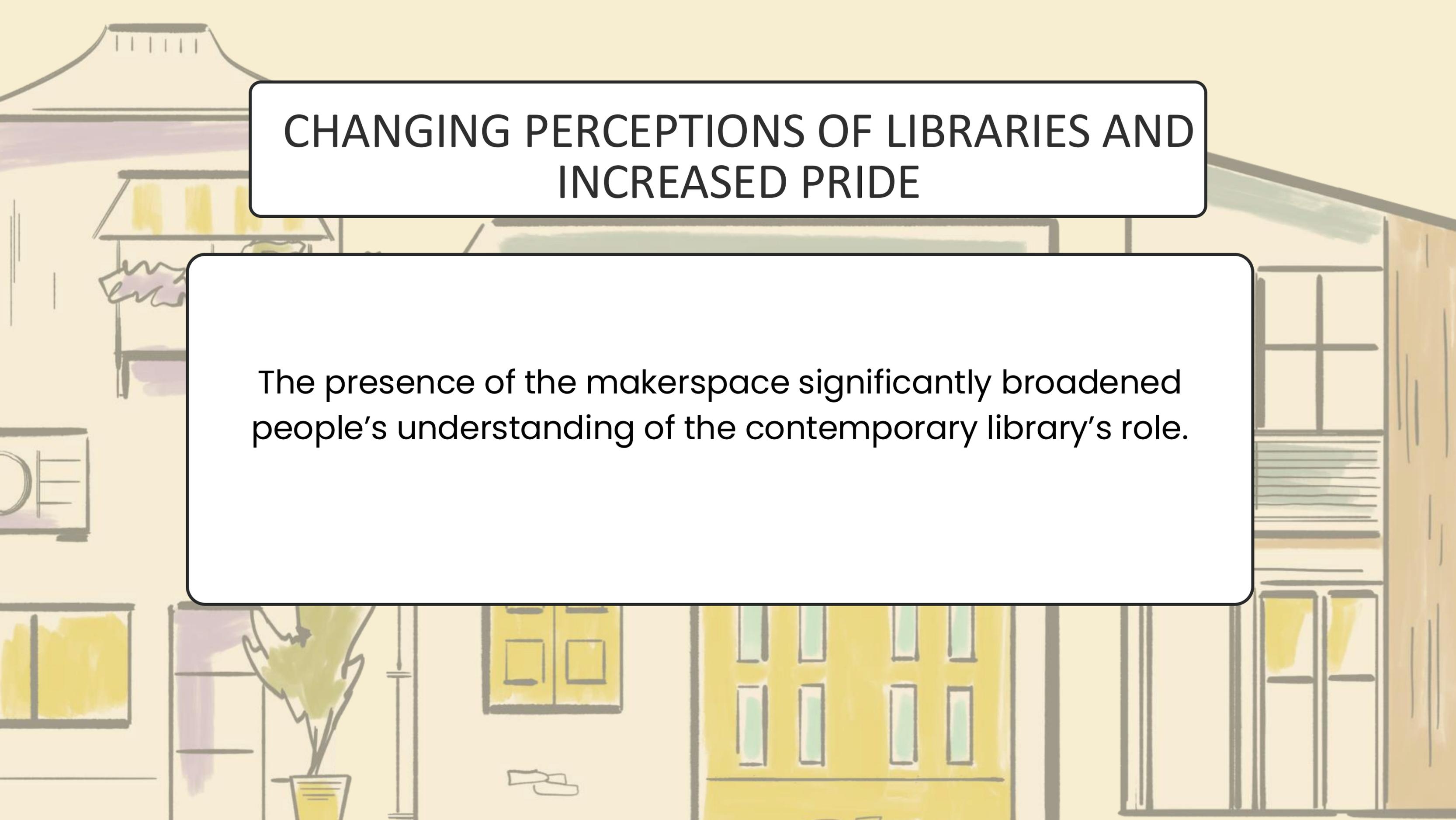


Public Good

A library makerspace, as a public good, offers learning opportunities, and provide services to create connected, educated, and empowered communities.

“It's important for people to have those creative outlets, especially since the arts are one of the things that are frequently cut in schools when there's budget concerns.”





CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARIES AND INCREASED PRIDE

The presence of the makerspace significantly broadened people's understanding of the contemporary library's role.

*“This is **the new wave library**, with more options and more opportunities, not just the books.” (Non-User)*

*“It's opened up a whole new avenue of things to do...When I was younger...you came here for a book and research for school...it's become something so much more than that. It's a gathering space; it's also a place to learn new things that have to do with so many different topics...it could be an activity you enjoy, a craft or maybe you're learning something new, or discovering something or even making friends at a place. I feel like the dynamic of what it comprises has kind of shifted to more of a community-based type of activities that they offer, versus just a place to go get a book and leave.”
(Non-user)*

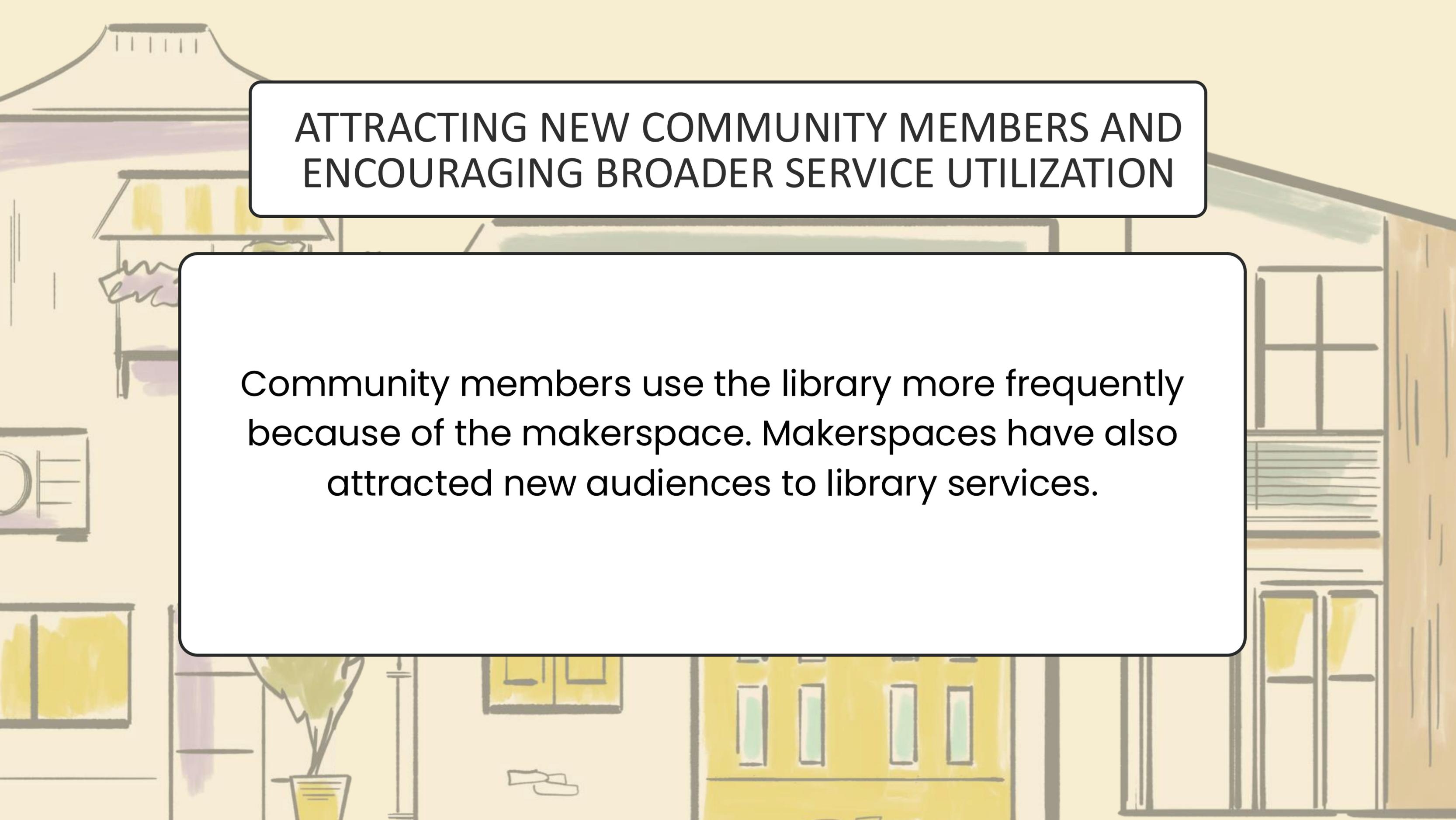


Community Pride in Their Libraries

*“Wow, we really have this? We have this amazing facility in our community...It's been **a source of pride**. For a lot of families and a lot of folks, it's been a true resource.” (Non user)*

*“I think it's great you're doing it, because I think the more communities that have makerspaces, the more they get to see what I'm always bragging about. My library. I mean, **I literally would move from here.**” (User)*





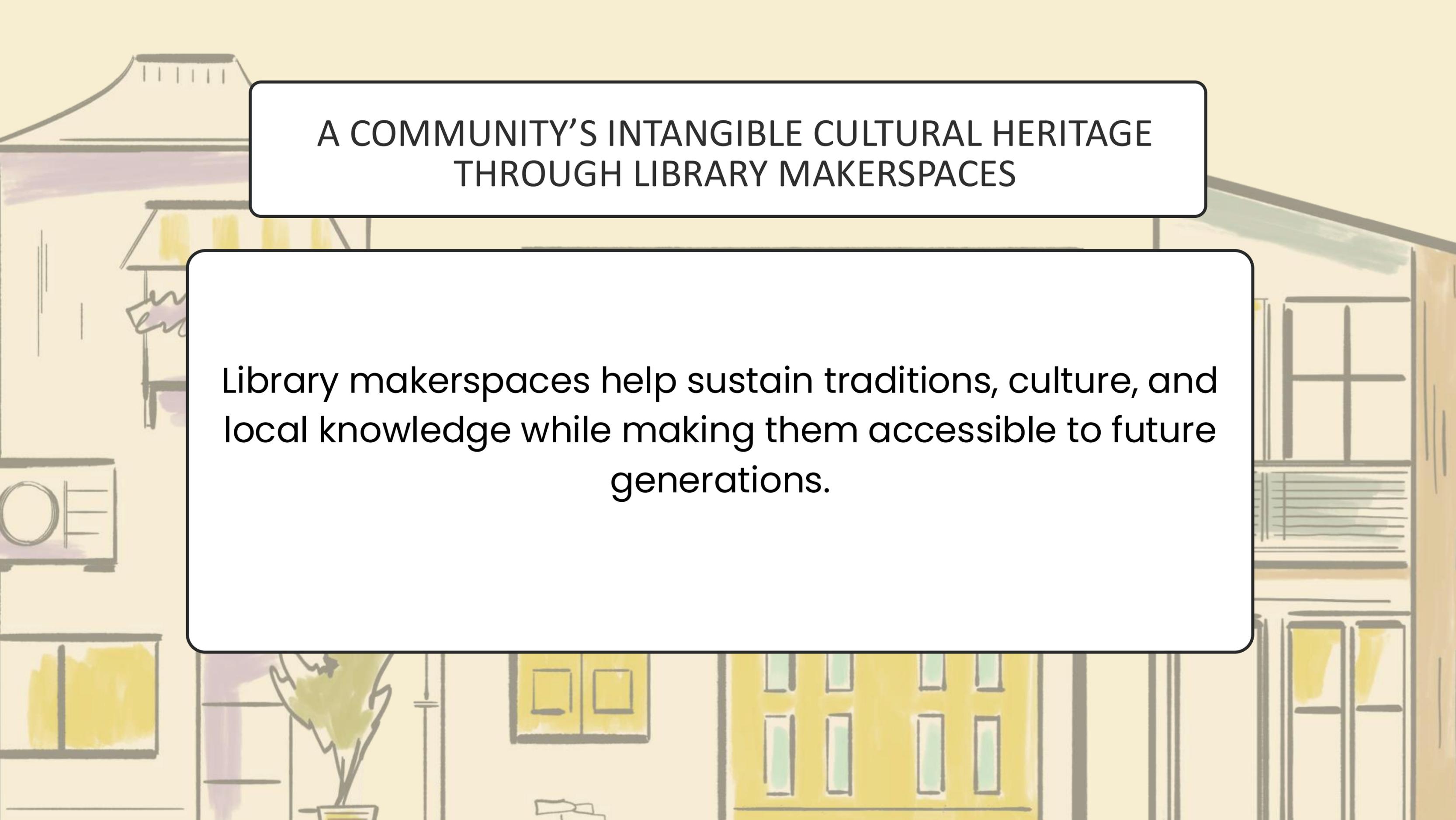
ATTRACTING NEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ENCOURAGING BROADER SERVICE UTILIZATION

Community members use the library more frequently because of the makerspace. Makerspaces have also attracted new audiences to library services.

“[without the makerspace] I think [the library] would definitely end up losing a lot of their teenage clientele...I think there are a lot of teens that come here specifically for the fact that there's maker and activities that you can do.” (Teen)

“Yeah. And that's part of why you come for a [maker] class, and then you wander around and go grab a book. That's usually how it works for me.” (Adult user)



A watercolor illustration of a building facade. The background is a light beige color. On the left, there's a window with a yellow glow. Below it, a vase with green flowers sits on a surface. In the center, there's a window with two panes. To the right, there's a larger window with a grid pattern. The overall style is soft and artistic.

A COMMUNITY'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH LIBRARY MAKERSPACES

Library makerspaces help sustain traditions, culture, and local knowledge while making them accessible to future generations.

“If you go to any of the shoe repair places in this area, it's these guys that are 102 years old. Well, who's learning how to fix the shoes when these guys are not here anymore?”

I think all of that kind of knowledge can be shared through the libraries, especially with the young people and trying to give young people exposure to these skills and careers.”



The library makerspace offered various classes, bringing in people from the community and beyond. One class featured a woodworking expert who taught how to make stools and explained the tools used. There was also a class on Indian jewelry by a skilled woman, and we learned needle felting. It wasn't just library staff—professionals and experts were invited to teach these classes, offering amazing learning opportunities that were hard to find elsewhere.



CHALLENGES

- Staff, time, and funding constraints
- professional pipelines and development
- Visibility and promotion of the space
 - Adaptation to change
- Meeting the needs of different populations

Implications: Under-explored Values

- **Sustainability**
- **Intellectual Freedom and Privacy**
- Access
- Equity
- Public Good



Implications: The Need for Formal Training and Community of Practice



The Role and Impact of Makerspaces in Society



Thank you!

Questions or Comments?

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