

**MAKER SPACE**

# Whose Values?

Navigating Key Tensions in  
Makerspace Design, Use,  
and Evaluation

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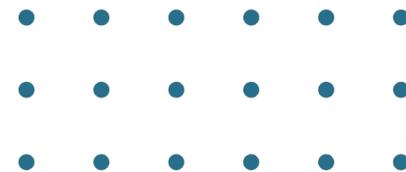
Library Makerspaces Research Showcase

February 28, 2025

# Public Libraries

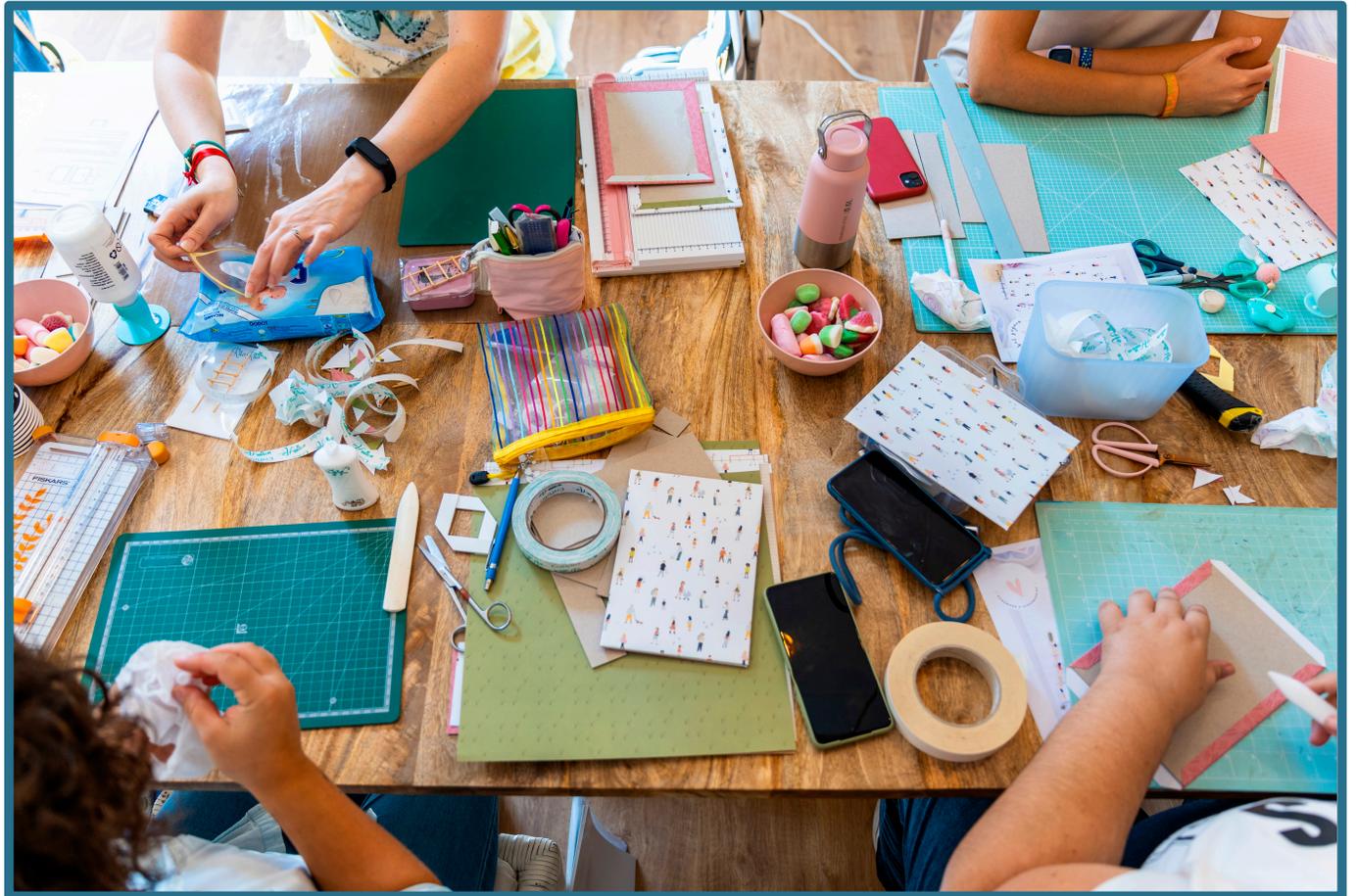
Provide access and opportunities to all community members (ALA, 2022; IFLA, 2010)

Serve heterogeneous populations: age, gender, racial and ethnic identity, language, educational attainment, (dis)ability, and more (IFLA, 2010)



“Anyone  
could be  
making  
anything for  
any amount  
of time in a  
library  
makerspace”

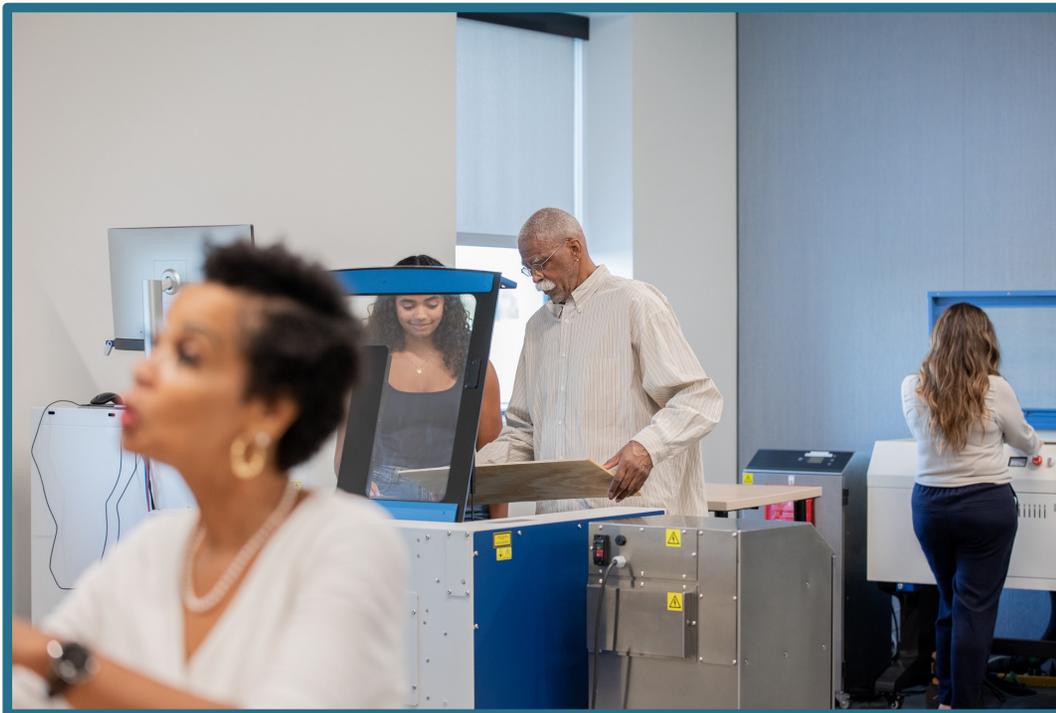
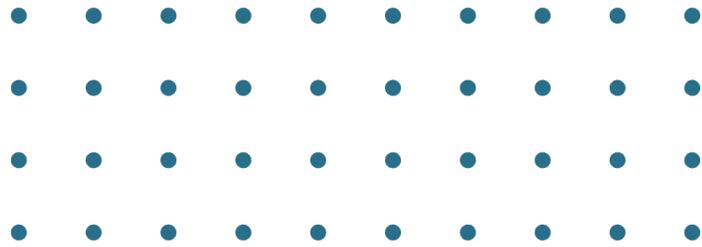
Cun et al., p. 40



# Equitable Opportunities

Extend opportunities and create inclusive makerspaces that foster a sense of belonging for a broad range of community members (Lakind et al., 2019)

“Baked into the fabric of their existence is a focus on equity and access” (Chang et al., 2019, p. 2)



# Self-Direction

Makers leverage public library makerspaces in support of their varying goals, values, and desired ends (Chang et al., 2019; Crawford Barniskis, 2017; Teasdale, 2021)



# Superpower



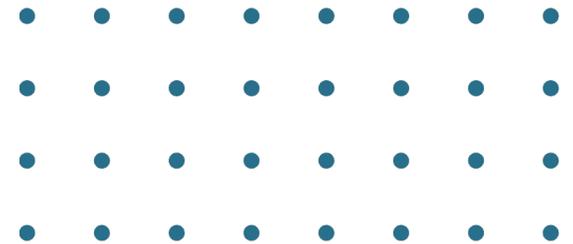
# Superpower...and greatest challenge?





# Balancing Varying Needs

Example: Makers pursuing dedicated hobbies and those engaging in casual leisure activities (Crawford Barniskis, 2023)



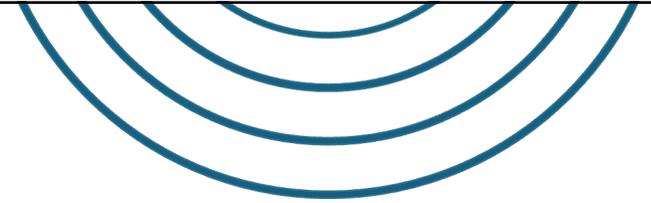
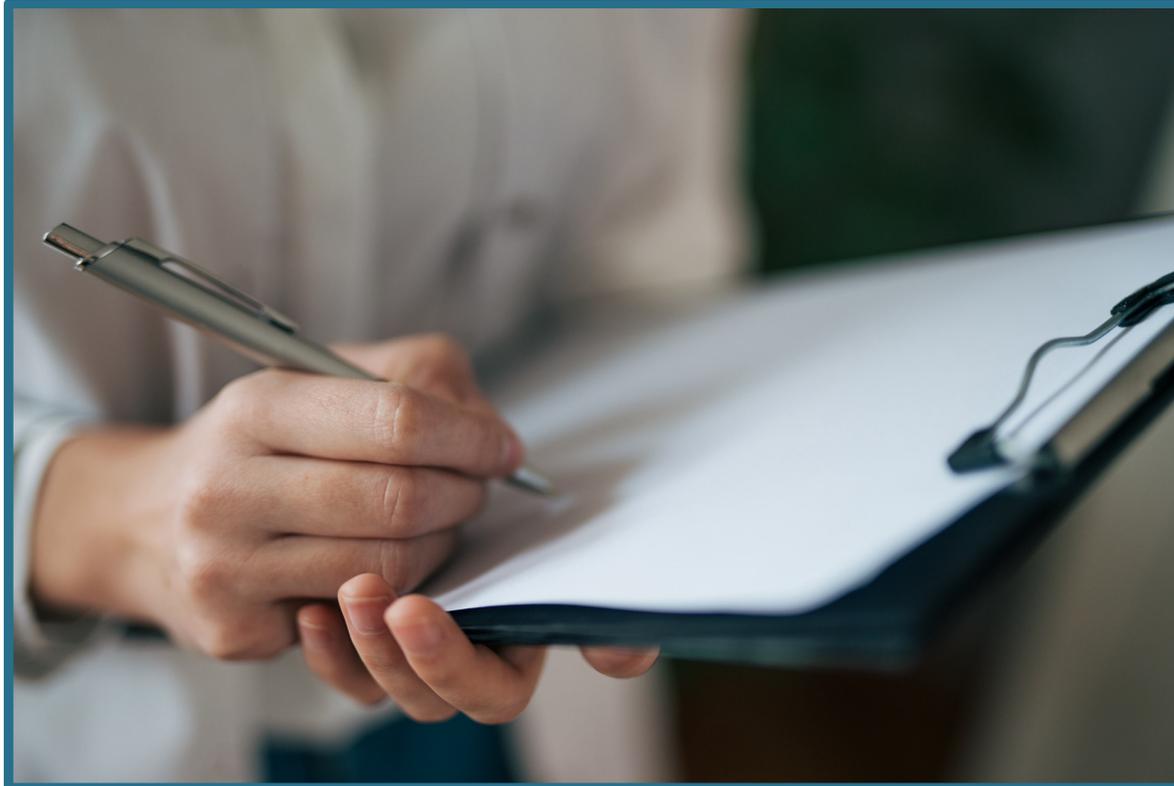


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# Research Studies

8 public libraries in 4 states

85 adult makers

48 staff & leaders

2016–present



This project was made possible in part  
by the Institute of Museum and Library  
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Teasdale, 2020, 2021;  
Teasdale, García, and Subhedar,  
in preparation



Adults deeply appreciate public library makerspaces.

The **aspects** they appreciate vary, based on their values.



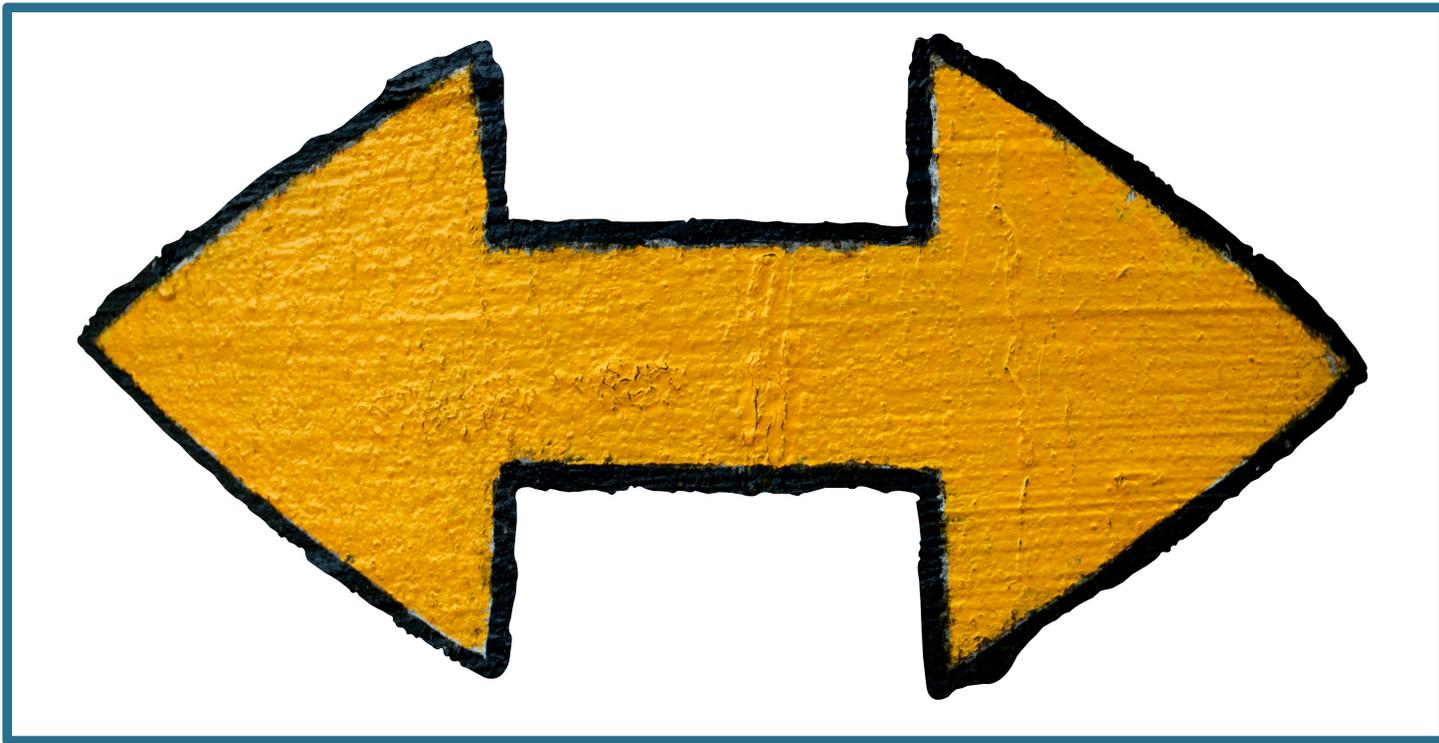




## 3 Key Tensions

1. Product and Process
2. Learning as an Aim and a Byproduct
3. Library and Community Values

# Tension 1: Product and Process





*[Let's] call them  
"adults on a  
mission"...  
they've got their  
task at hand.*

-Daniel (staff)

Note: All names are pseudonyms





## Products: Making for Work

*The parent comes in, the kid is the translator, and the parent is like, "I'm going to repair my apron for work because I'm a server and my apron is broken, and I can't afford a new one."*

-Harvey (staff)





Tshirt created by Rhonda (maker)

## Products: Saving Money

- Creating T-shirts for a family reunion or a team
- Etching glassware for a wedding
- Making decorations for home or a special event
- Producing invitations or holiday cards
- Fabricating thank-you gifts for volunteers and donors



## Products: Supporting Others

*With the memory pins...I got that idea because my child's father, he was murdered five years ago. So, when you go to trial, you're not able to actually wear [a shirt] with pictures of your loved one on them. It's against the law. So, for whoever is the matriarch of the family, I give them a pin.*

*-Carrie (maker)*

# Process: Being Inspired

*I realize [I'm] probably not coming to crochet...but [it's] more about being inspired and wanting to create and wanting to see what other people are working on.*

–Sydney (maker)



# Process: Nurturing Relationships

- Spending quality time with children, parents, siblings, grandparents
- Meeting up with friends for a fun activity
- Sharing a hobby with family or friends
- Providing a “treat” for the family



# Process: Connecting with Other Makers

*I'm not from the state. I didn't go to school here. So, it's difficult as an adult to make friends or peers in your hobbies [...] I was like, "All right, I can do [makerspace] classes. Maybe I can find some people who are also like-minded nerds."*

-DJ (maker)



# Process: Enhancing Wellbeing

*You're not called for laundry.  
You're not called for cooking.  
You're not called for any other  
thing other than what you're  
making [...] You've silenced your  
phone, and you sit in the  
makerspace. Nobody's going to  
disturb you. You have those  
two hours to yourself.*

–Maahika (maker)



# Product and Process: Implications

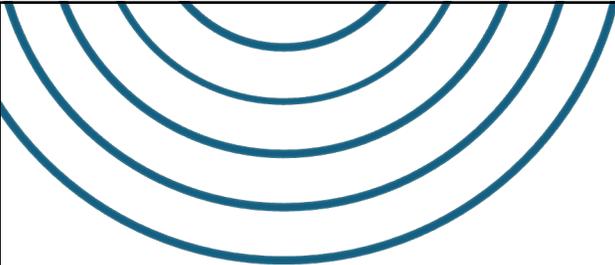


Consider how scheduling, spatial arrangements, and rules differentially support “adults on a mission” or makers with process-related aims.

Identify training, support, and resources that staff need in order to “meet people where they are”.

# Tension 2: Learning as an Aim and a Byproduct





## Aim: Learning to Make

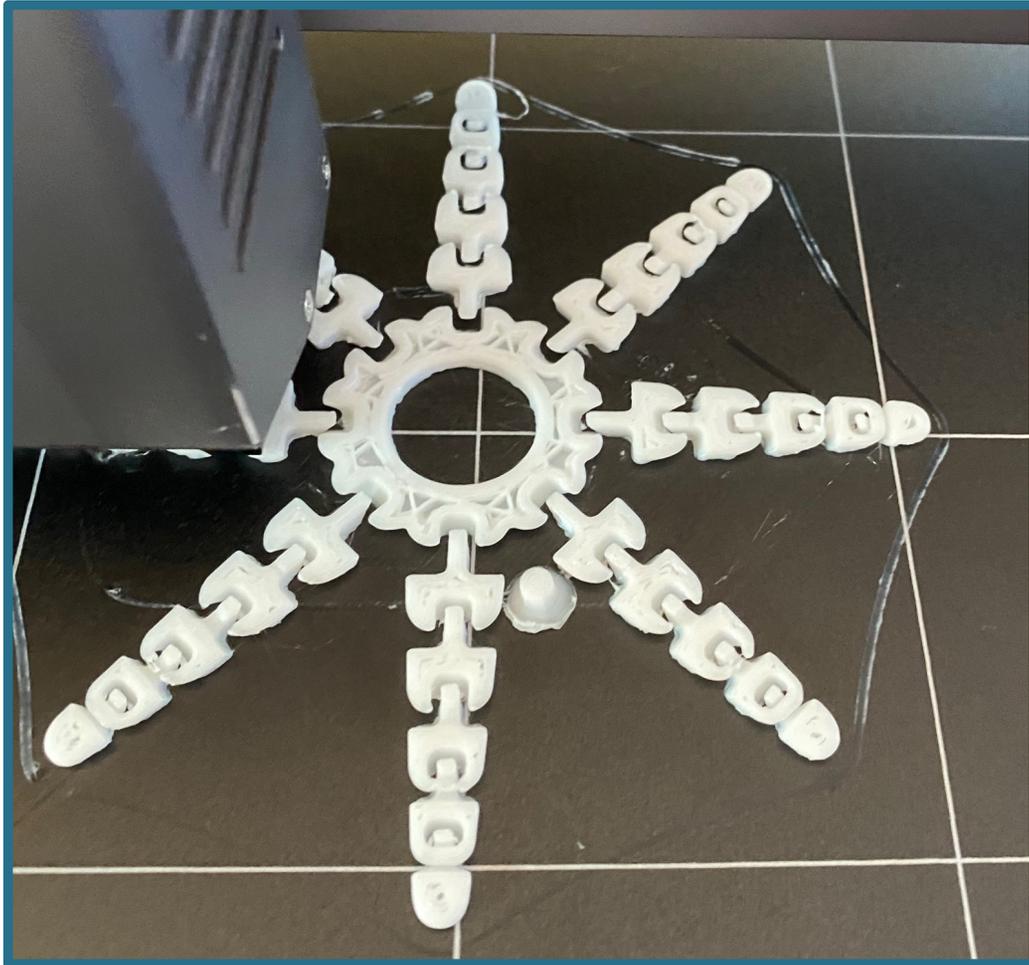
*It opens my mind to new and different ways to think about things or approach things.*

–Hannah (maker)

*I enjoy learning a lot. I'm a senior citizen. I think that when you stop learning, you stop living.*

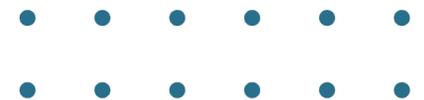
–Lavender (maker)





## Aim: Learning about Equipment

- Developing an understanding of equipment functions and features
- Building skills in operating and troubleshooting
- Making informed purchasing decisions

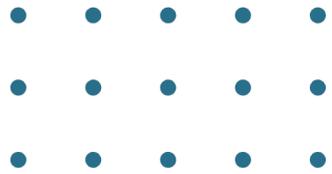


## Aim: Facilitating Others' Learning



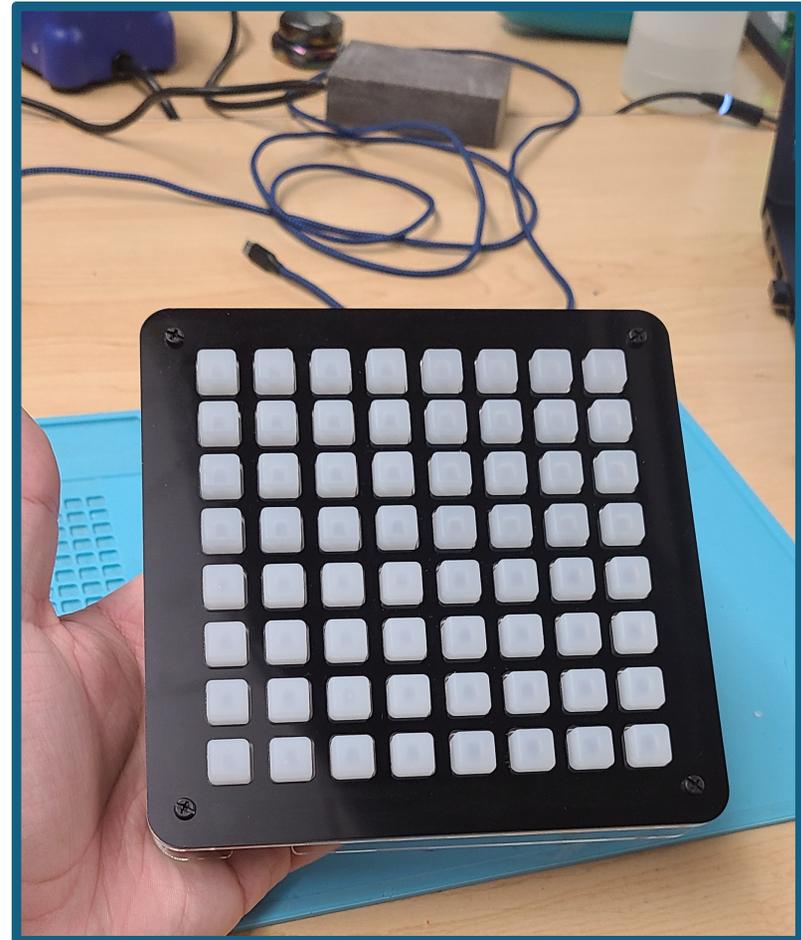
*When the kids are working with shapes, they're trying to understand the difference between copying and pasting something versus, well, they might manipulate it manually. [...] So, just helping them out with understanding how to manipulate objects digitally.*

*–Bob (maker)*



Adults often  
organize their  
learning to make a  
specific item or  
achieve a particular  
goal – their learning  
is a byproduct of  
their making

Litts, 2015; Teasdale, 2021



MIDI launcher created by Ruben (maker)

# Learning in Adulthood

Adults' learning often arises from the context of their lives, in relation to their roles as partners, parents, community members, workers, etc.

Jarvis, 1992;  
Merriam et al, 2007



# Public Computing

Building technology skills and digital literacy

Accomplishing tasks of daily life such as applying for a job, filing taxes, communicating with loved ones



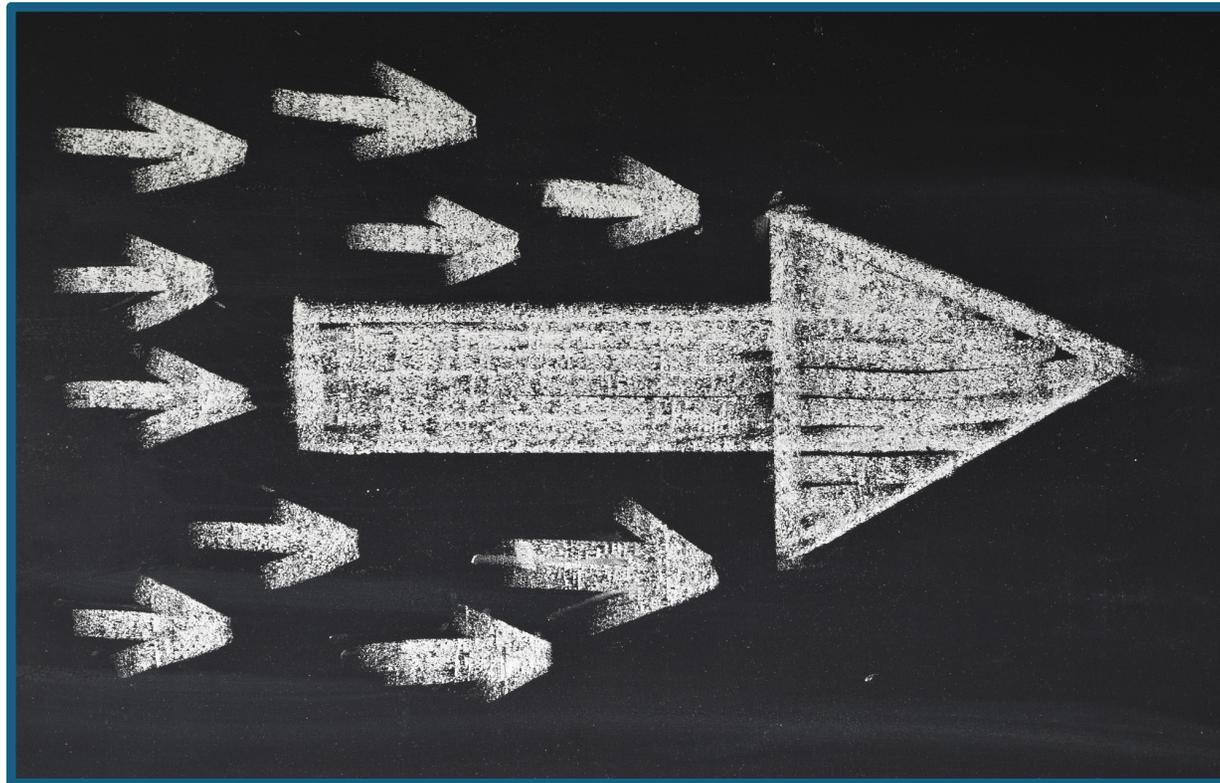
# Learning as an Aim and Byproduct: Implications



Consider how makerspaces are framed—as learning spaces, production spaces, and/or social spaces

Choose among different ways of supporting learning (see Einarsson & Hertzum, 2020) to address specific learning aims

# Tension 3: Library and Community Values



# Library Goals

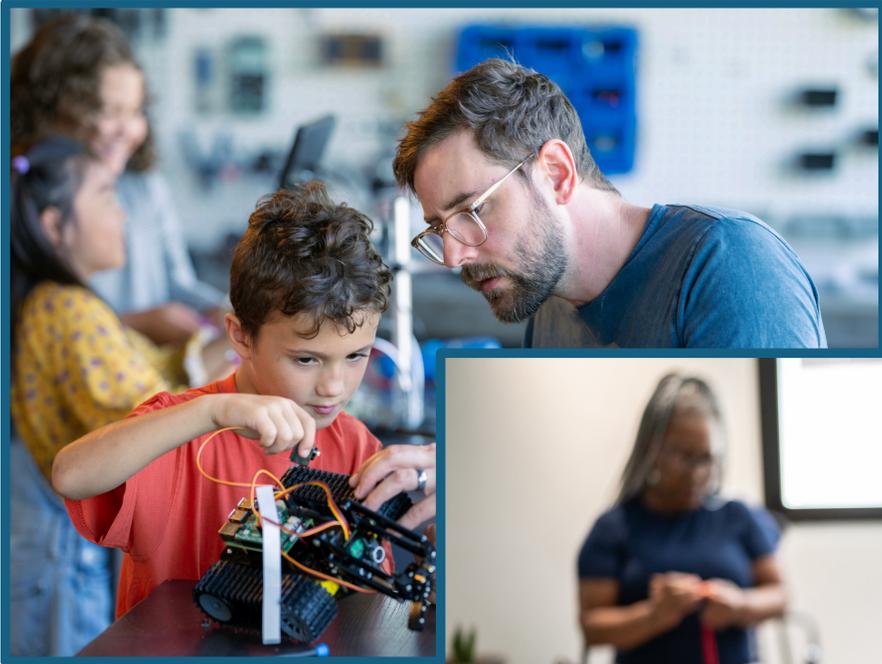
Unlikely to address the heterogeneity found within public library makerspaces

Focusing only on library goals could:

- Overlook some benefits adults seek and could realize in the space
- Miss key community values and priorities

Teasdale, 2020





# Library and Community Values: Implications



Gather information about community values and use findings to shape the makerspace (see Regalla & Van Halsema, 2024)

Ground evaluation in both library and community values

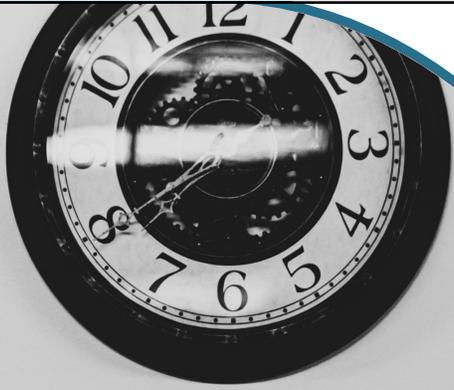
Consider segmenting makers to examine how the makerspace supports them in realizing the benefits they seek (see Teasdale, 2020)

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**Thank you!**

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