Library Digital Media Lab Profiles

Abstract

Chapter 4 of Library Technology Reports *(vol. 50, no. 6) "Digital Media Labs in Libraries" describes the digital media lab projects at five libraries: University of Wisconsin-Madison's Design Lab; Studio 300 at the Fountaindale Public Library in Bolingbrook, IL; the Bubbler's Media Lab at the Madison Public Library (WI); Studio I in the ImaginOn in Charlotte, NC; and Tulare County Teen Media Lab.*

The following five libraries answered an eleven-question survey about their DMLs. These questions were curated from responses by librarians on various social networks about what they would like to know about DMLs. Theresa Cahill Agostinelli, a librarian, reviewed the survey before it was sent out as a Google Form.

DesignLab

The University of Wisconsin–Madison's College Library hosts DesignLab, a "media lab and design consultancy" for students.[1] The campus's student population is 43,000 as of fall 2013.[2] Jon McKenzie, the director of DesignLab, writes that the DML "complements other campus services by providing students with conceptual and aesthetic advice on media projects they produce for courses, student organizations, and professional development."[3] The beautiful design of the DML's website adds trust in the authority of the consultants as experts in media and design. The DesignLab opened in 2012.

DesignLab
http://designlab.wisc.edu

Students go to the DesignLab to seek help in adding polish to their digital media projects. The consultant works with them for thirty-minute appointments. According to an interview with Channel3000, "McKenzie said he's also very interested in using DesignLab to help students build portfolios and preparing them to think about how they could share the work and research they've done even after a class ends."[4] By creating professional portfolios using a variety of media formats, which DesignLab refers to as *Smart Media*, students are taught how to turn a paper into a photo essay, then share their work on the web for prospective employers. The six categories of Smart Media are

- Video/Multimedia
- Presentation
- e-Writing
- Imagery
- Audio
- Web[5]

Examples of student work created in DesignLab are available in the Smart Media Gallery.[6]

Funding

McKenzie writes that the university raised funds for DesignLab through "a means-tested tuition increase focused on improving undergraduate education."[7] This funding comes through as the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates. The original 2010 proposal describing DesignLab and its benefits to the campus is available online.[8] The proposal also includes an estimated budget based upon the number of teacher assistants. The DML is open in the afternoons seven days a week.

Thanks to having a steady source of funding, DesignLab was able to create several new positions: a faculty director, a staff associate director, and nine
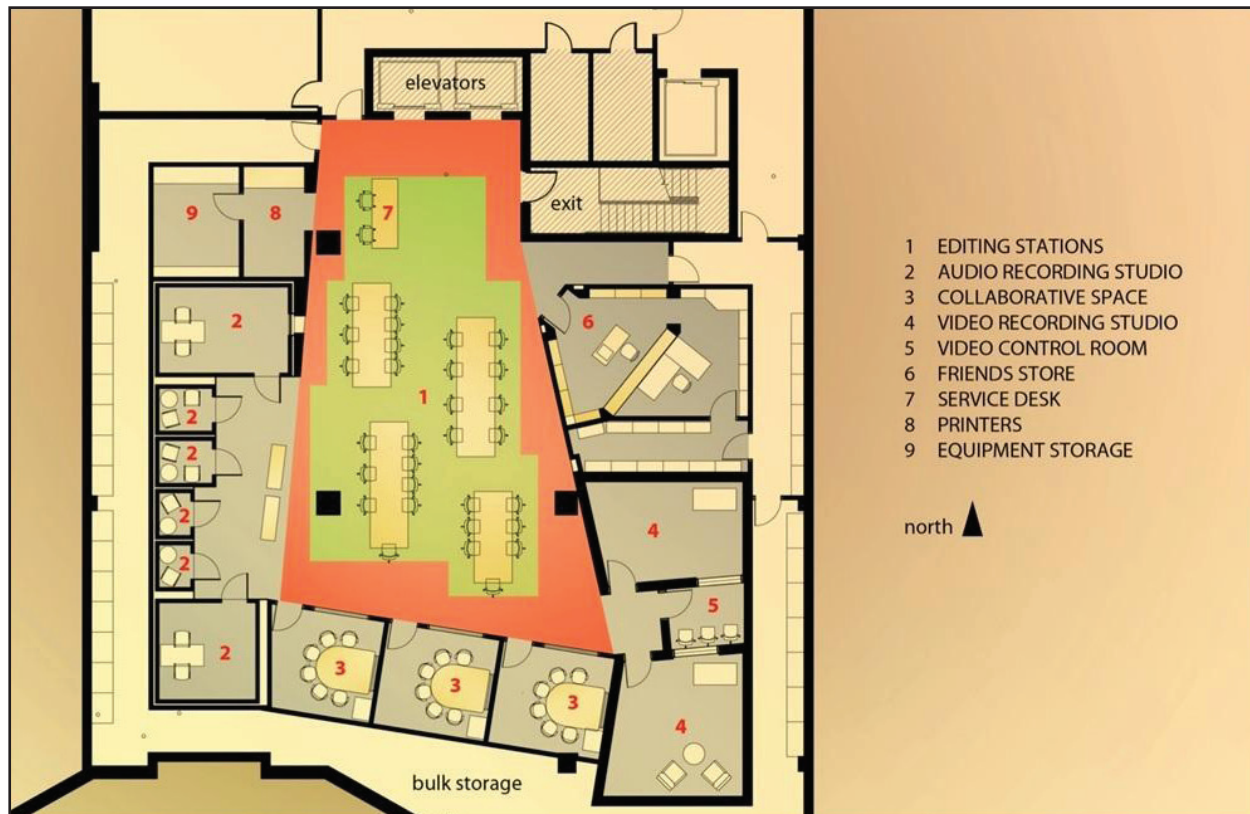
Figure 4.1
Studio 300 floor plan. Courtesy of Nagle Hartray Architecture.

teacher assistant design consultants. The nine consultants were hired from various programs across multiple colleges. Their skills include "art, communication, data visualization, design studies, educational media, graphic design, information studies, rhetoric and writing, and videography."[9]

Marketing of DesignLab is done through traditional student outreach. This means through flyers and social media that students see around and through events on campus. Newer methods include digital kiosks, targeted e-mails, and the library's Digital Salon exhibition. The Digital Salon is "an exhibition of new media projects."[10] While representing DesignLab at a school exhibition may not seem that new, the DML having guided many students toward success is a great way to market the consultants' services.

Education

STAFF

Since the teacher assistant design consultants come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds, they are already well equipped to help students. Further training is provided "in human-centered media design principles, smart media forms, software, consulting skills, and operational logistics," writes McKenzie.[11]

PATRONS

The library provides research-related workshops and hardware for students to check out. For basic technical instruction in software, the central information technology unit provides training. Students may bring their project to the DesignLab first to discuss it. Later, students may return to receive feedback on their work. Together, the library and DesignLab form a comprehensive educational plan for students to create their best portfolio.

Students are not the only users of DesignLab's services. Instructors have access to a range of activities that can increase their understanding and usage of digital media in the classroom. Topics include

- how to evaluate digital media
- how to use Smart Media in class
- how to share students' work online and through the Digital Salon

Equipment

The main asset in DesignLab is the human kind. Consultants help students plan, design, implement, and

Digital Media Labs in Libraries   **Amanda L. Goodman**

evaluate their digital media projects. To help students with this task, the consultants use iMacs. These computers are equipped with Final Cut Pro, video editing software; Adobe Creative Suite, which covers graphic design; and "other common media production software," writes McKenzie.[12]

Policies

Only students of the university are allowed to use DesignLab to work on school-related projects as well as faculty learning how to integrate digital media into their curriculum. No outside partnerships or commercial ventures are allowed to use the DML's services. Finally, McKenzie writes that training on copyright is done by the library. Its services "provide training, information, and other resources pertaining to intellectual property, copyright, fair use, and Creative Commons to our consultants and student clients."[13]

Studio 300

The Fountaindale Public Library (FPL) in Bolingbrook, Illinois, lies about forty minutes west of Chicago. Jeffrey Fisher, Studio Services Manager, writes that its DML is an extension of the library's mission because it teaches and enables patrons to use digital literacy skills.[14] The 71,500 residents of Bolingbrook may access Studio 300, the library's DML, "to curate, create, and share their stories."[15] While most libraries support the goals of introducing patrons to new technologies, FPL's goal is to "help [patrons] become digital content creators and not just media consumers."[16] As one of the largest DMLs in the United States, Studio 300 has 6,800 square feet containing eleven rooms and workstations for printing 3-D objects and posters (see figure 4.1). Studio 300 opened in March 2013.

Funding

In 2011, the FPL's new building was opened. The library's board decided not to utilize the space on the lower level until the purpose of the area could be decided upon. When a DML was decided upon, the library used the remaining $3 million from the library's building budget for construction. Thanks to this careful planning, Fisher was able to fill the DML with $600,000 worth of equipment.[17]

With such a large addition, a new department, Studio Services, was added to the library.

Studio 300 is staffed by seven people. The manager is a full-time position, while six assistants each work 25 hours per week. For his position, Fisher writes that the "Studio Services Manager requires extensive experience in digital media production, computer knowledge, and management experience."[18]

In order to ensure that the eleven rooms are in frequent use, the library has invested in multiple avenues to keep educating the public about Studio 300. These campaigns are promoted across various platforms such as social media, billboards, and print materials. Partnerships with the community get word out about the resources through a variety of channels. For example, the DML participated in a small business expo. However, Fisher says the best publicity comes from word-of-mouth referrals.[19] Patrons share their success stories with their friends and thus drive continuing interest in the space.

Education

STAFF

Since FPL had the resources to hire talent, it sought people who were already knowledgeable about digital tools. For anyone who needed to brush up or pick up a new skill, access is provided to the video tutorials of Lynda.com. Aside from assisting patrons with their projects, DML staff members are also responsible for cross-training other library staff in how to use the DML for their projects. Thanks to this investment in a well-educated staff, patrons are able to concentrate on creating content, knowing that any pitfalls can be overcome with help from a subject expert.

PATRONS

Before using the DML, patrons attend a mandatory orientation to become familiar with policies related to Studio 300. After the session, patrons may begin work. Complicated equipment such as the video production resources will require further training to ensure not only safety, but also better quality products. Some patrons may be able to use the equipment in the DML without any further interactions with staff. For those who do need assistance, classes, one-on-one tutorials, and library resources such as Lynda.com are also available.

Equipment

Six soundproof rooms make Studio 300 the recording studio of choice for local musicians. Each of the eleven rooms comes fully stocked to support a variety of activities. Sample projects include producing video and audio, creating e-books, and partnering with others locally or at a distance via the group collaboration rooms. The library places no limitations on commercial usage of the DML and, in fact, actively recruits local organizations to use the space because these community groups are "vital to our continued success."[20]

Aside from special studios, over a dozen Mac computers are available for producing media. These computers are not available for general computing.

However, the best resource for patrons is the DML's staff. Each person is a subject specialist in digital content creation. Information about staff and equipment, a must-see photo tour, and more are available on Studio 300's blog.

Policies

Patrons are required to fill out a waiver whenever they use the rooms or check out equipment. Fisher writes that this "reminds me of their responsibilities per our policies."[21] The mandatory orientation also includes information about copyright infringement. Patrons are expected to respect copyright and staff "will not provide assistance to patrons who blatantly attempt to circumvent copyright."[22] As a secondary reminder, notices are attached to any equipment that could be manipulated to get around copyright (e.g., analog-to-digital conversion). A full list of policies related to Studio 300 is available online.[23]

The Bubbler

If Web 2.0 was going social, the next wave of the Internet is going creative. The Bubbler's Media Lab at Madison Public Library (MPL) in Wisconsin "is a free space to explore digital media production in the realms of stop motion animation, 3D world design, green screen video, audio design and graphic design."[24] Trent Miller, Library Program Coordinator, writes, "The goal of the Maker Lab is to promote use of the Public Library as a place to create content, instead of only consuming it."[25] This theme of creation, rather than just consumption, of content is seen in the mission of all DMLs.

However similar to other DMLs in goals, the Bubbler stands out in its focus on programming. Miller, along with his colleagues, envisioned a creative space where people could not only learn but also share their skills with others. The Bubbler programs show up throughout Madison in locations where teens hang out. For example, at the Goodman South Madison Branch Library, a portable animation program was started. Another program held at a branch library in fall 2012 included making cyanotypes, a nineteenth-century printing process.[26]

However, the home base of the Bubbler is located at the Central Library, where the DML is housed. Plenty of technology can be found in the Media Lab, including custom game design PCs built by staff.[27] The Bubbler program and Media Lab were opened in 2012.

Funding

Like Studio 300, the Bubbler's Media Lab was funded using money raised for the Central Library's renovation project. The entire Bubbler program received a $25,000 grant in 2013 from the National Endowment for the Arts.[28] As part of this grant, the library was required to raise another $25,000 to match the award. Additional funding for the Bubbler is provided through BMO Harris Bank.[29]

For the DML portion of the Bubbler, one full-time employee was hired. Nate Clark holds a "degree in media production and a professional background in video game production."[30] Volunteers are sought to help with drop-in hours and workshops. An ideal volunteer will also have experience in a digital media skill. Additionally, library practicum students may help as they learn about digital media in libraries.[31]

While the entire Bubbler program has a number of partners and experts helping lead programs, the Media Lab works with WYOU, a local public access channel. Through this collaboration, the DML is able "to coordinate special projects and some volunteers."[32]

The Bubbler is so popular with locals that many patrons find their way to the DML thanks to word of mouth. Otherwise, the Media Lab relies on traditional web channels such as the main library website and social media accounts.

Education

STAFF

Media Lab staff members are not required to demonstrate a set number of skills. However, the Media Lab does actively recruit staff who are knowledgeable in some aspect of digital media. The current skills of staff may be viewed on the Bubbler website at the Media Lab Weekly Schedule link below.

PATRONS

The Media Lab offers classes to patrons five days a week. Of the eight hours the DML is open each day, six hours are dedicated to drop-in Open Lab sessions. The remaining two hours are reserved for workshops or classes. For the January through May 2014 schedule, patrons could come in to talk to someone about game design, stop-motion, audio engineering, and camera techniques. Since most of the staff are volunteers, access to new skill sets are frequently introduced to the community as volunteers rotate on and off the schedule.

For the Bubbler program in general, emphasis is placed on a cross-generational approach to education.

The library wants to find ways "for youth to learn from adults and vice versa."[33]

MPL has also embraced a mobile style of outreach where the library goes out into the community at popular hangout locations. These short-term pop-up style events allow the library to engage the public where they naturally congregate and give the library an opportunity to increase digital literacy skills within its city. This mobile DML model can be embraced by other libraries that own portable equipment.

Equipment

The Media Lab supports both individual workstations and a group classroom setting. Aside from computers and a sound booth, animation tools are supplied using iPads and lightboxes. The software for animation is Stop Motion Studio (an iPad app) and iMovie. The game design computer hosts the Unreal Engine software. Additionally, a wide variety of camcorders can use the green screen or be mounted for users on the go. Miller writes that the most popular pieces of equipment are the "Stop Motion Animation Studios and the Digital Creation PCs."[34]

Stop Motion Studio
https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stop-motion-studio/id441651297?mt=8

Unreal Engine
https://www.unrealengine.com

Policies

Since the Media Lab is so teen-friendly and the space is continuously staffed, no liability forms are necessary. The only rule is that children under the age of thirteen must be accompanied by an adult. Likewise, since the Bubbler thrives on creative partnerships within the community, it places no limits on commercial ventures using the equipment. Copyright is discussed during classes, but otherwise is addressed only on a "case-by-case basis during open labs," Miller writes.[35] With this open environment, the Media Lab remains a popular and thriving location for the creative members of the Madison community.

Studio i

Studio i is located in the ImaginOn: Joe and Joan Martin Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. The DML opened in 2005, though the idea to build the center was conceived in 1997. ImaginOn is a collaborative effort between the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte.[36] With this unique partnership, the organizations envision a mission "to bring stories to life." Studio i supports this mission by providing equipment to create and capture stories.

The round room of the DML (see figure 4.2) is promoted toward teens who are "facilitators of the media" as opposed to staff.[37] This focus on empowering teens to take control of their exploration of materials has led to an internship program. Teens are given "leadership opportunities and experience that they can take with them beyond high school."[38] Some of these students then go on to study in fields related to activities they worked on in their internship.

Aside from teens, Studio i also caters to families and tweens. Parents with children age eight and up are invited to use the space on family days. Tweens between the ages of eight and eleven may come on group visits. By providing a narrow focus on youth, Studio i provides a safe place for teens to build technical skills in a creative environment.

This survey was completed by Kelly Czarnecki, Technology Education Librarian, and Mary Kyle, Senior Library Services Specialist/Teen Services, at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.
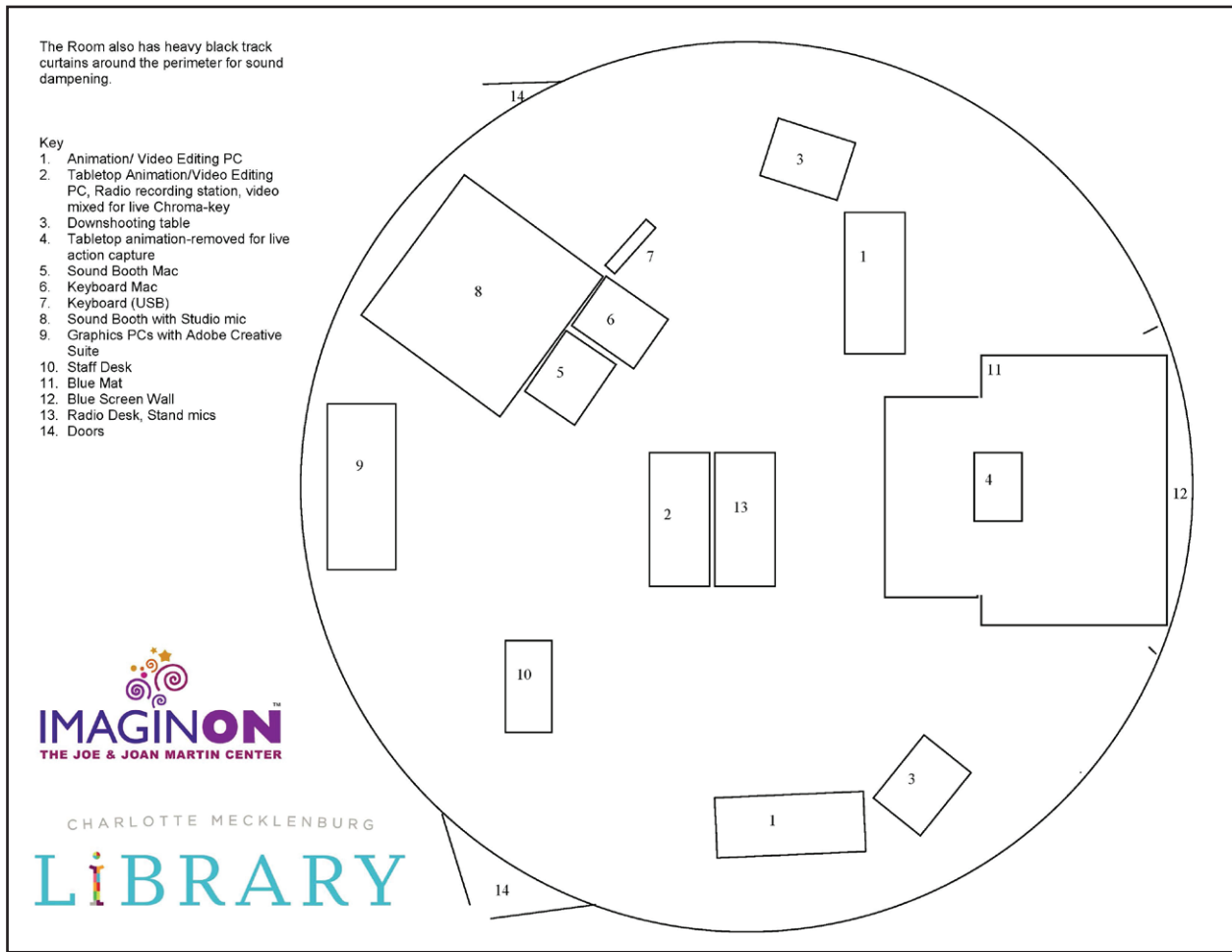
Funding

Since ImaginOn was dreamed up so many years in advance, Studio i was built at the same time as the rest of the building between 2003 and 2005. This was ahead of the curve for DMLs in library-related spaces: many DMLs in this report were built only in recent years. The original equipment was furnished "by a Technology Opportunities Program grant (TOP), and a North Carolina state grant for technology."[39] Later on, a sound booth was added using "gift funds and money from an honorarium for the creation of the CSLP 2007 Teen Summer Reading PSA."[40]

Six library staff members supervise Studio i. These staff members usually work one to two shifts per week in addition to their normal duties. When field-trip tours come through, a library staff member will accompany the group. Staff members take turns with these patrons. Since the intern program has been such a success, a pair of teen interns are occasionally allowed to watch the room without library staff present. At this point in the internship, the teens are experienced and have shown themselves to be competent with patrons and the equipment.

As a joint venture, Studio i has multiple community partnerships. By working with local experts, teens and groups get to capitalize on the resources of the DML. Czarnecki and Kyle explain it best:

> John Lemmon Films (www.jlf.com) is a local animation production studio. The owner of the company, John, helped design Studio i and has worked with ImaginOn since. He has spoken at state and

The Room also has heavy black track curtains around the perimeter for sound dampening.

Key
1. Animation/ Video Editing PC
2. Tabletop Animation/Video Editing PC, Radio recording station, video mixed for live Chroma-key
3. Downshooting table
4. Tabletop animation-removed for live action capture
5. Sound Booth Mac
6. Keyboard Mac
7. Keyboard (USB)
8. Sound Booth with Studio mic
9. Graphics PCs with Adobe Creative Suite
10. Staff Desk
11. Blue Mat
12. Blue Screen Wall
13. Radio Desk, Stand mics
14. Doors

Figure 4.2
Studio i floor plan. Image credit: ImaginOn and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

national conferences including PLA about the DML and always sends educators our way when they inquire with him about animation or filmmaking.

The Children's Theatre of Charlotte (CTC) (www.ctcharlotte.org) is the other organization that makes up what is ImaginOn, along with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. Students in acting classes use the Studio to record their audition segments. Teachers from CTC give workshops on public speaking or how to talk in front of a microphone for our radio podcast program. Tech engineers have held workshops to demonstrate lighting and sound effects. Equipment in the theatre is often used as a part of a production whether it be to create effects for shadow puppets or to add films as part of the show.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) (www.cms.k12.nc.us/) is the public school system for the county. While all groups are certainly served including homeschoolers, charter schools, other organizations, or even out of town guests, the bulk of group visits come from CMS. Teachers share information with their students about the intern program as well as organize their class projects around using

the Studio. One visit, a science teacher had her students record raps in the sound booth about the concepts they were learning in class!

Our Turn it Up Teen Radio (TIU) program is run out of Studio i. Our main partnerships for this program include WFAE, a local NPR affiliate, the Carolina School of Broadcasting (www.csbradiotv.edu/), and the Connecticut School of Broadcasting (www.gocsb.com). They give workshops each term on information such as interviewing on the radio, writing a segment, recording, and editing.[41]

New users often hear about the DML through word of mouth. These users in turn help create further awareness by creating videos, which are then uploaded to Studio i's YouTube channel. Teens then share the videos with friends, who begin the cycle again of bringing new users to the DML. Additional marketing is done through other social media channels run by the library and through posters located throughout the library system. These posters highlight how Studio i can help a teen compete in a national contest.

Education

STAFF

Since the DML was part of ImaginOn from the beginning, the initial staff members were all hired for their technical knowledge. However, staff members have other duties as well, so no one is expected to be a subject specialist. The first class of employees went through a one-day workshop by animator and Studio i designer John Lemmon. Staff members hired later job-shadow other employees or even highly skilled teen interns. Manuals are provided throughout the space to help employees and patrons get up to speed on a particular piece of equipment.

In addition to having technical knowledge, a Studio i employee also needs great soft skills. These abilities include "giving participants ideas for what to do in front of the camera, helping teach others so that they can understand the hardware and software themselves, and being patient when something isn't working the way it should."[42] Studio i's model of requiring technical knowledge and strong soft skills would be a useful one for many libraries.

PATRONS

Since the DML has no dedicated staff, patron assistance and training are usually done on the spot as needed. Basic help on how to get started and how to troubleshoot is available. Occasionally, special instructors will come in from around the community to do a workshop on a topic such as lighting equipment.

Teens who participate in the Our Turn It Up Teen Radio podcast program receive more training than general users. Aside from just technical knowledge, teens are also equipped with fundamentals related to audio programming. They are taught "how to speak while being recorded and how to interview someone."[43] Thanks to this additional support, the teen radio program continues to enjoy success.

Equipment

Teens love capturing their own stories. Using Garage-Band, the teens record themselves rapping in the sound recording booth. In the other rooms, the teens film in front of the blue screen in the Pinnacle Studio. Meanwhile, materials used to create animated films range from paper to clay. A selection of teen animated films was made using markers on a whiteboard. These videos can be seen on Studio i's YouTube channel.

Policies

Yet even creative teens sometimes push boundaries in their projects and need behavioral limits. These boundaries are generally related to what lyrics are appropriate to record and how many people can be in the sound booth at once. Teens check in with staff so they can be held accountable in case of damage to the equipment.

Discussions about respecting copyright comes up only as needed. Czarnecki and Kyle write, "We find it helps not to be overly protective of copyright infringement but at the same time not to pretend it doesn't exist and that it can present very serious issues if it's disregarded."[44] Teens are encouraged to follow copyright law and also think of how to address the limitations in their work.

As far as how Studio i can be used, commercial ventures are not allowed in the space. However, staff are open to looking at a proposal on a case-by-case basis. There was a time that someone withheld information that their project was for a commercial venture, but by the time of discovery, "The project was already underway."[45]

Teen Media Lab

The county of Tulare, located in the lower central part of California, has very limited access to books and technology due to funding issues. A 2013 study by the Public Policy Institute of California, *Californians and Information Technology*, found that residents in the region that includes Tulare County have the least access to broadband in the state.[46] Faythe Arredondo, the Teen Services Librarian of Tulare County Library, writes that this situation is "due in part to a higher than average poverty rate and scarcity of access points for more rural communities."[47] To compound the cycle of poverty, residents of Tulare have a high illiteracy rate.[48]

The library decided to focus on improving the futures of teens by applying for a LSTA grant to fund a DML for them. The DML would provide tools, technology, and the Internet—things which many teens had no prior way to access. In 2011, the library won a $28,000 LSTA grant for a program titled, "Teen Vooks: Exposing Teens to Tools for Digital Creativity" (*vooks* being a word for enhanced e-books).[49] The program provided the funding to buy laptops, camcorders, and other digital tools.

The DML has been a runaway success. In the first six months, the number of teens accessing the equipment rose from 7 to 62 students for an increase of 886 percent.[50] Since the usage of the DML is unstructured, teens feel real ownership of the equipment. They designed their own summer reading murder mystery program based on the game Clue.[51] Then in 2013, the

Teen Media Lab was recognized for excellence as a recipient of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Challenge Award.[52]

Funding

The LSTA grant won by the library provided nearly two years' worth of support for the DML. In 2013, Arredondo applied for and received two more grants. One $15,000 grant was for an iPad Mini program so teens can document their lives in Tulare County. The other, from the Best Buy Foundation, was for $10,000 to add more equipment to the DML.[53] The day-to-day funding to purchase ink and art supplies is provided by the library. Additionally, a MiFi was bought to bring WiFi access to the teens so they do not "have to compete with other library patrons for the Library's WiFi," Arredondo writes.[54]

Only one staff member, Arredondo, runs the DML. Her reference desk colleagues, she writes, "[support] the project by working the reference desk and freeing up the teen library staff to be off desk and run the program."[55] No other volunteers assist, though the summer reading program was created by the Teen Advisory Group (TAG). The teens that volunteer for TAG help plan some of the programs that are run using the DML's equipment.

At this time, because the DML is funded by grants, there are no community partnerships. Marketing is done through the library's marketing team. The DML appears as a program on the library's event calendar. Arredondo notes, "It goes on hiatus at times like all library programming" when she is unavailable to staff it.[56]

Education

STAFF

Jeff Scott, the Tulare County Librarian, notes that Arredondo "was already well-versed in digital creativity" when she was hired.[57] Her skills helped her to research and evaluate equipment for the DML. The job description does not require a specific set of skills, though one would argue that ability to secure grant funding is needed since that is the lifeblood of the space.

PATRON

The library is sensitive to the fact that teens may be touchy about their lack of digital skills. Therefore the library takes a hands-off approach and lets the teens use the equipment their way. Arredondo stresses the importance of allowing "teens to learn at their own pace and without judgment."[58] The teens understand the library's approach, as student Gunner Santos says: "You really have that freedom to do what you'd like to do."[59] The flexibility of the environment is what led to

creating their own summer reading program, "A Summer to Die For."

Equipment

With the laid-back attitude of the library, teens are free to use the equipment in the DML for their own purposes. The equipment includes MacBook Pros, Photoshop, and Final Cut Pro. Teens use these tools to help with homework or work on TAG programs. When the DML is not being operated, teens are able to use the laptops for an after-school program called Study Hall. Creative uses include designing book covers, recording songs, and making book trailers. Teens are also welcome to browse the web since so many do not have access to the Internet at home.

Policies

In keeping with the library's hands-off approach, there are no liability forms. As Arredondo says, "We trust the teens to be responsible."[60] However, since the library needs to apply for grant funding, photo release waivers need to be signed so the DML can be promoted.

Finally, copyright concerns were addressed with the teens when the DML first started. Teens were taught how to access copyright-free and Creative Commons materials, which they can use for free in their projects. This action has taught the teens how to be respectful members of the digital community.

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