

Designing Interactive Library Spaces on Limited Budgets Webinar Q&A Log

Questions from live Demco Webinar, as answered by Brian Pichman, Director of Strategic Innovation at Evolve Project and Liz Bowie, Demco Content Manager

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Q: How do you survey the interests of your community?

A: The two most common ways are email blasts or through calling. With email, you could send out a mass communication through a service like MailChimp or Constant Contact and link to either a Google Form, Survey Monkey, or a JotForm (my personal favorite). Tips for emails include being creative and fun, but in general, emails have a low response rate for surveys. In terms of calling, you could make manual calls or use a more intrusive, but effective, automated dialer (check out [twilio](#)). In my experience, the best way to get a response to your queries is in person.

Through casual conversations, train your staff to ask a particular series of questions (that sound more like a conversation) and document those responses through a spreadsheet or a form. The conversation could go something like this: "Hello, I don't believe we've met. My name is Brian Pichman, and I'm the IT Personnel here. Did you find everything you needed today?" Then ask the following:

- Great, what kind of books are you looking for (project or hobby driven)?
- We are always seeking to expand new ideas; what kind of programs are you and your family and friends interested in?
 - Then provide examples such as coding, circuits, 3D Printing, etc. You don't have to go through the full list, just spark conversation. It could even be done as, "Oh, we are interested in doing some 3D Printing. Do you think that would bring people into the library?"

Then be sure to jot down, and train your staff to jot down, what you learned during your conversation. If you build enough of these user conversations, you can start pooling together some useful data.

The other option is to host a brainstorming session. Invite your community members to attend a Brainstorming for the Future of the Library session and list out goals and objectives. This approach works well, and you may even find people who will be willing to donate money to the cause.

Q: What are some strategies for developing admin buy-in for transitioning my library space?

Liz: Take a look at the advice in Holly Storck-Post's [4 Benefits of Holding a Maker Program for Your Staff](#), Colleen Graves's [Getting Buy-in for Your Makerspace](#), and [25 Reasons Library Makerspaces Are a Good Thing](#) to help you make your case.

Brian: I've taken different approaches, such as bringing in a "gadget" to play with; have it out on the floor and let users, staff, etc., play with and interact with it. Other times, I would cover some of the topics I touched on in the webinar, such as the reasons fewer people are coming into the library during non-summer reading program months. The fact that it is no longer summer is NOT the answer, as there should be more users in the library during the school year to use the resources we have to offer. Alternatively, ask them what would be one significant impact the library could make with your community that would separate you from the herd (lead them to the solution of moving into a makerspace).

Q: Do you have patrons offer to buy art you have on display from other patrons? Is that an option?

A: I haven't heard it personally, but I would recommend the library share the contact information of the artist (with prior consent, of course). Follow up question: Should that library then run a "How to Get Started with Etsy.com" program? That would be really great to generate a new economy within the library walls.

Q: Does Demco have any grants that would provide for furniture donations?

Liz: Demco offers a free Grants Search tool, which can be accessed here: [Grants Search](#).

Brian: You could always reach out to vendors. I found out that Smart Technologies, for instance, gives education grants for first-time buyers to the platform, ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,000, depending on the size of the project. (I don't know if they still do this.)

Q: With idea paint, do you have any trouble with the content of what is drawn/written? How is it maintained? What age range does it target?

A: We didn't run into issues while I was there. We saw more offensive content being written in the bathrooms than anywhere else. There is somewhat of a magical understanding (for lack of a better reason) that the space is for learning and exploring, and the general positivity in the area of the space helps maintain that. It was geared towards elementary to junior high kids, but high schoolers used it to do projects together.

Maintenance was pretty simple. We bought whiteboard cleaner and wiped down the wall once every few weeks. Usually if the dry-erase ink doesn't stay on for multiple weeks, everything will wipe away with just a paper towel.

Q: Are these electronic products simple enough and user-friendly enough so that, if left in a maker room, patrons would be able to pick them up and use them without instructions or assistance?

A: Yes, most of the products covered are intuitive, and you can pick up and start using them. Some of the more hardware-orientated products (like Wink Robot, for instance) do require a little bit of instruction, as there is more of a coding element with it. However, with Sphero, Cubetto, Cubelets, Bee-Bot, littleBits, and many others, users often learn how the product works through trial and error. They then see how the product reacts, adjust their approach, and start to identify how it works and what it's capable of. I've found that sometimes leaving instructions is a hindrance, as after a user completes the example activity, they assume the lesson is over and move on, when in fact, they just began learning about the product and the teachable skill.

Q: How would the patrons know they need to get an app for many of these products?

A: In some libraries, we have implemented the simple index card rule. The card would include a picture of the app, the name, and what it does on a single card (almost like you would see in a museum).

Q: Have you seen libraries offer these technology-related items for check out?

A: Yes! I encourage all libraries to circulate and allow items to be checked out. It's free marketing if users take the item to show their friends. They'll want to come into the library and find out more.

Q: Does your library circulate any of the tech toys? Or do they just use them at the library?

A: In the library I used to work at, we allowed for circulation. We would put a stop on checkouts a few weeks before an event where we would need them.

Q: Do you have suggestions for tech toys the entire family can enjoy?

A: Yes, some of these products have introductory levels (like intro coding) as well as more advanced (like automated coding). This is useful when a single product can offer different learning outcomes based on skill level. To explain this in detail, look at the chart below.

Product	Intro Level Activity	Advance Level Activity
littleBits	Create circuits	Program circuits
SAM Labs	Create a remote control car	Use third-party plugins to generate tweets and post images.
Wink Robot	Teach the robot to light up, move, or make a noise	Teach the robot to move on its own and respond to light or sound
Sphero	Drive the ball around	Code the ball to move on its own

There are also products that allow for an entire family to play at one time. Here are some activity ideas:

- littleBits: Families can gather around creating and making circuits, in a very similar fashion as they would with Legos.
- Hummingbird Kit: By combining craft materials, wiring, and coding, families can create interactive robots. Each family member can have a part in the design and creation.
- Makey Makey: Families can work together in building games and finding out what is conductive and exploring “what else can Makey Makey do?”
- Sphero: Families can create an obstacle course and take turns racing through the course. Sphero also has an app that plays “tag” if multiple people are connected to the same Wi-Fi network.
- Ozobot: Family members can build mazes for the robot to follow and see who creates the fastest maze.

Q: Will you share where you purchase the interactive boards?

A: The wooden interactive boards we sourced from LFI (Library Furniture International).

Q: What was the name of the interactive display software (the one where the woman was throwing a ball to a dog)?

A: That was from an artist named Karolina Sobecka. She explains how it was [designed here](#). They mainly used a series of cameras and projectors along with the code from <http://openframeworks.cc/>.

Q: I need more info on how to create a gesture wall. What does it involve? How do I create it?

A: The gesture wall shown from Dayton Ohio is [detailed here](#). You could build something a bit less fancy and only buy a single Microsoft Kinect and [install Kinect Paint](#).

Q: What are your favorite sources to stay aware of new activities going on in libraries? (And thank you for the webinar!)

A: The library conference that jump-started my career with the Evolve Project would be [Internet Librarian](#) (and the sister conference [Computers in Libraries](#)). I personally go and enjoy the [Consumer Electronic Show](#), which runs the first week of January every year.

Q: If they are completely tech-challenged, where would someone go to get started? Hopscotch? Scratch? Basics for beginners?

A: Hopscotch has a bunch of intro tutorials to get you started with the basic mechanics of the app and how to get your first game going. [Scratch](#) is very similar, and YouTube is full of ideas and activities. I prefer Hopscotch, as they have a [developed curriculum](#).

Q: What have been some of the most successful ways you have advertised these types of interactive spaces to the public to bring people into the library?

A: Word of mouth is crucial. Makers hang out with other makers, so encourage them to tell their friends and family. If you are struggling with getting makers altogether, steal an idea from [NYC Resistor](#) and go to coffee shops and set up small maker tables. Challenge people to complete a circuit or move a robot. Start conversations with people and ask them to bring some friends and family to a “getting started” day for makers that you are holding at the library.

School libraries can do something similar. Host a Family Maker Night and set up stations where kids and their parents can interact with the tools, both low-tech and high-tech. Make sure you have some simple projects on hand that they can do during the short time they are visiting each station to give them a sense of accomplishment and possibly a creation to walk away with to remind them of the cool activities they did during maker night. Take the opportunity to explain to parents what kids are learning through maker activities and how you are offering them those learning opportunities in your school.

Q: Are there many resources out there for libraries looking for makerspace supplies (tech, crafts, activities, furniture) all in one place?

Liz: Demco provides many resources for your makerspace; take a look through our [Makerspace Solutions](#) page or contact one of our specialists to discuss your specific needs at 608.242.2358. We’re also always working with experts to bring you advice and tips on our Ideas and Inspiration site: ideas.demco.com.

Brian: I would check out www.makeitatyourlibrary.org for ideas and activities. For prebuilt supplies AND activities see www.browndoggadgets.com.