

Youth Coding Makerspace Event

Makerspaces and Making

LIS5937

Janice Steinhoff

December 2, 2023

Youth Coding Makerspace Event

Introduction

The Clearwater Main Public Library has a youth makerspace called Discovery Studio of Creative Learning and a few teen programs for robotics and gaming. The Discovery Studio is geared toward elementary age youth, and the teen programs for ages 13-18. The middle school, pre-teen ages of 11-13 lack the space, programming, and resources to be creative makers. The Clearwater Library System is part of the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (PPLC), a 14-member library collaborative within Pinellas County who provides services to the municipalities with libraries and the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County. Within these 14 libraries, makerspaces for middle school age children are lacking. To fill this void, to start, a makerspace event for coding program will be developed within the Clearwater Main Public Library for this age group. This program will be launched as a mini maker event in May to coincide with *Scratch Day* (scratch.mit.edu). *Scratch Day* is “an event that celebrates Scratch, the free coding platform and online community for teaching coding to young children” (Willingham, 2017). Utilizing this platform, youth can be taught the basics of coding and the ability to continue to learn through the online programs. Introducing this in the library setting as a mini maker event can help to showcase the library and its programs and services with a goal to determine continual interest in a coding makerspace or other maker activities. Additionally, a goal of creating a Third space and a community for this youth age group while learning and creating (Bar-El, 2016) can be developed. Planning this space as an event to start can help to garner interest in the continuation with ongoing structured programs or as a drop in makerspace.

Maker Event Program

Creating this event will be in collaboration with library youth services staff and a partnership with community coding businesses if available. Additional partnerships can be with St. Petersburg College, who shares space with two libraries within PPLC, utilizing volunteers (staff or college students) with experience in coding. The volunteers can help the students with concepts or showcase coding at higher levels. Development would need to start at Library Administration to obtain support for the event and the potential for future events, approve a budget for this and future programs, or assigning a particular room within the library for an ongoing makerspace. The first document needed would be a project plan to present to Library Administration. Additional documents include marketing materials, schedule for the event, directions for utilizing the *Scratch* system program, information from the *Scratch* website regarding community guidelines, terms of use, and privacy policies, clear signage of usage of the space including time limits of computer use (to allow for everyone to have an opportunity), passwords to access WiFi if needed, rules of the space regarding eating and drinking, supervision, and general use of the space, evaluation and survey materials to evaluate the event. Lastly, information on makerspaces and potential creating ideas can be given to inform all who attend of what this program is and the potential for future programs and spaces.

Equipment needed for the event include computers and workstations with seating and power outlets, WiFi access for all computers, ethernet access and cables as a backup, A/V equipment to highlight instructions for the room (Willingham, 2017). Additional tables and seating for the staff and volunteers of the event to answer questions, showcase coding examples, or advertise vendor business (if present), and other library programs and services.

There will also need to be ample space to host the event, possibly utilizing one of the meeting/presentation rooms within the library. The budget items would include: 2-3 library staff for the event (additional staff will be needed to run the event); marketing materials (paper for flyers and advertising the event, handouts for information about *Scratch*, evaluations, and surveys); additional equipment not readily available such as additional electrical cables, hired help with set up/clean up of equipment (including heavy lifting of computers, tables, etc.), 2-3 library IT support staff for the event.

Marketing would take place within the library itself through program catalogs, online calendar of events, website announcement, and social media. Advertising would also be directed to local middle schools and homeschool groups to describe the event, time, date, and location. Advertising through email and flyers to these groups would reach the greatest number of potential attendees. During the event, marketing for other library services or local partnering organizations can take place. As people leave the event, a brief evaluation can be obtained to determine the success (or not) of the program. Additional questions could include: Would the attendees like to continue this type of program in the future, either as a drop in space or structured? Are there any other creative topics or ideas for makerspaces they would like to see?

Conclusion

Makerspaces for middle school, pre-teen youth are not as available within Pinellas County Library System as are programs for younger elementary age or older teens. Developing a maker event for this age group can help showcase what it means to be a maker, introduce coding, and connect with the youth to determine the interest in future maker spaces and maker programs within libraries. Introducing this population to library services and programs can

potentially help to develop the library as a third space for kids to socialize, share ideas, and learn.

References

Bar-El, D. & Zuckerman, I. (2016). Maketec: A Makerspace as a Third Place for Children. *TEI 2016, Feb. 14-17*. Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Scratch. <https://scratch.mit.edu>.

Willingham, T. (2017). *Library Makerspaces: The Complete Guide*. Rowman & Littlefield.