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Libraries Reinvent Themselves as Makerspaces – by Steve Fox

Across the United States, libraries are turning into business and artistic incubators.

Libraries are silent, solemn places where people read quietly and shush anyone who dares to talk, right? Not anymore. Academic and public libraries throughout the United States are reinventing themselves as makerspaces—gathering places where people build things; incubate businesses; create art, music and movies; develop software programs and, generally, let their imaginations run free. The rapidly growing makerspace movement aligns with President Barack Obama's Educate to Innovate initiative and his call to "think about new and creative ways to engage young people in science and engineering ... encourage young people to create and build and invent—to be makers of things, not just consumers of things."

While there is no official estimate of how many of America's roughly 120,000 libraries have created makerspaces, the trend is widely recognized.

"American libraries are not just passive repositories for information. They're becoming a lot more interactive," says American Library Association President Courtney Young. "Our society is at a critical juncture in terms of supplying the information and skills people need to thrive in a rapidly changing world, and libraries have an increasing role as positive environments where people can learn and grow and create."

Makerspaces, also known as fablabs — shortened from fabrication laboratories — and hacker spaces, can be as simple as collections of tables and chairs where patrons work together, or as comprehensive as dedicated workshops crammed with computers, 3D printers, vinyl cutters, carpentry tools, program boards, musical instruments, audio equipment, sewing machines, craft materials and more. Makerspaces enable libraries to move away from a transactional model of checking books out to more transformative models centered on what Young describes as "skill sharing, collaborative learning and hands-on practice."

With many books and publications now available online, libraries had to re-examine their purpose and mission, says Tod Colegrove, director of the DeLaMare Science and Engineering Library at the University of Nevada in Reno.

"We developed relationships with other makerspaces and one thing led to another," Colegrove explains. "We added equipment for 3D scanning and printing. We added computer workstations. It built from there. Now there's a lot of creative energy and we have 200 to 250 users on any given day. We're actively exploring what it means to be a library in the 21st century. It's not just about books. It's about engaging with the community."

"Students loved the 3D printers. Somebody printed out a brain and somebody printed out a little V-8 engine that was primitive but you could see the pistons rising and falling and the crankshaft turning," says Patrick Smith, a student who visits the DeLaMare Science and Engineering Library regularly. "This place encourages you to meet the strangers next to you, and that really matters. We can learn a lot from books but the true expansion of our intellectual abilities is through others who are interested in doing similar things."

The makerspace movement, which now encompasses all types of libraries, was pioneered, in part, by the Fayetteville Free Library, a public library in a small village in upstate New York.

"We take a lot of risks in our programming," says Fayetteville Free Library's executive director Susan Considine, who was honored as a White House Champion of Change in 2013. "We respond directly to our community, asking them what their dreams and aspirations are and then aligning our resources to meet their goals."

Fayetteville Free Library's makerspaces target all ages, with its Little Makers area intended to facilitate the development of critical thinking, problem solving and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills in children aged 5 to 8 years.

"Libraries are ideal places for this type of learning to happen," says Considine. "Libraries serve people for their entire lifespan, from youngsters to old age. There's no reason for us to simply be passive consumers of information when we can come to the library and make things."

Steve Fox is a freelance writer, former newspaper publisher and reporter based in Ventura, California.

Source| http://span.state.gov/business/libraries-turn-into-makerspaces/20150101#sthash.0v2dfNJU.dpuf

Shivaji University likely to start Braille Library

KOLHAPUR: Shivaji University's vice-chancellor N J Pawar on Tuesday said the university is thinking of starting a braille library for visually impaired students.

He said that while the members of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) peer team who came calling in September last year had found the university to be doing well in research, they had suggested that it set up a well-equipped braille library for visually impaired students on the campus and those from affiliated colleges.

Pawar was speaking at the function held to inaugurate the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) workshop at the university library.

Librarian Namita Khot said the university has set up a study centre this year for visually impaired students. The students are not charged any fee for using the facility.

The ICT workshop, in the meantime, was held to teach visually impaired students the basics of technology. A faculty member in the English language department, Manohar Waswani, also told the students about the career options they had.

Source | http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/Shivaji-University-likely-to-start-braille-library/articleshow/45904802.cms

Elsevier to launch all-discipline OA journal

Elsevier is preparing to collaborate with the research community to develop an open-access journal covering all disciplines on one platform, with the aim of enabling 'continual experimentation and innovation'.

The publisher says plans include improving the end-to-end publishing process and integrating its smart technologies to improve search and discovery. Elsevier says the journal will offer researchers a streamlined, simple and intuitive publishing platform that connects their research to the relevant communities. Articles will be assessed for sound research rather than their scope or impact.

Publishing and product director Sara Grimme said: 'We are building an online interface that provides authors with a step-by-step, quick and intuitive submission process. As part of a transparent publishing process, we will alert authors on the progress of their submitted papers at each stage.

'To streamline the editorial process, we plan to use assets

and technology developed by Elsevier. For example, by using data from Scopus and the technology behind it, we can quickly match papers to relevant editors and reviewers, significantly shortening peer review times.

Grimme continued: 'Elsevier has spent nearly two decades developing smart content, search-and-discovery tools, and a wide range of platforms that are used by researchers worldwide. For example, we use semantic indexing to make search results more relevant and enable more efficient browsing for research on specific subjects. By adding citation and usage data to the indexing, we can enable readers to identify the articles most important to their research.

'The content will appear on ScienceDirect, which has more global usage than any other scientific publication platform, and on a dedicated website, where we aim to structure the content in a way that will make it extremely easy to discover so authors gain maximum visibility and credit for their work.'

Elsevier integrates 100,000 maps from Wiley

Elsevier has announced an agreement to integrate some 100,000 maps from Wiley's journals into the Geofacets platform. The companies say the content integration will increase the amount of trusted data available to geoscientists, helping them to make better-informed decisions in exploration, as well as improve recommendations that influence company investments in new exploration opportunities.

Content to be added includes fundamental geologic maps, petroleum geoscience maps, geophysical maps and specialised maps, such as those focused on sedimentology and geochemistry. The content is from 26 Wiley journals, published on behalf of several society partners (including the American Geophysical Union,). This will increase Geofacets' content portfolio to more than 500,000 maps extracted from almost 200,000 associated articles by the end of the year.

Geofacets is Elsevier's premier research tool for geoscientists working in natural resource exploration. Geofacets extracts geologic maps from trusted, peer-reviewed publications, making content easier to find and integrate with other data. Users will have seamless access to multi-disciplinary content extracted from Wiley journals and maps including high impact journals such as Basin Research, the Journal of Petroleum Geology, and Sedimentology and journals published on behalf of the American Geophysical Union including Geophysical Research Letters, Reviews of Geophysics, Journal of Geophysical Research and Paleoceanography.

'We are delighted to be able to offer our users Wiley's industry-leading content, which will prove

invaluable to exploration geoscientists operating all over the world, including emerging basins,' said Ella Balagula, senior vice president for engineering and technology at Elsevier. 'Geofacets is expanding with content users can download in a variety of formats and seamlessly integrate with a variety of tools such as ArcGIS, Google Earth, and the Petrel platform. With this diverse content offering, users have the benefit of accessing multi-disciplinary data from the greatest number of relevant sources possible.'

Library of masterworks of Indian literature launched

Modern English translations of classical works across a vast array of languages from India across two millennia, have been made available for global readers through the Murty Classical Library of India (MCLI), launched here today.

Set up by Harvard University Press with the help of a personal endowment in 2010 by Rohan Murty, son of Infosys founder Narayan Murthy, the library aims to publish as many as 500 books over the course of the century.

Nobel Laureate economist, philosopher and author Amartya Sen was chief guest at the launch function, which saw personalities ranging among others the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Montek Singh Alhuwalia.

A set of five books brought out by the MCIL was handed over to Singh by Narayan and Sudha Murthy as well as Rohan.

"The shaping of India's future depends on understanding its past," the Nobel Laureate said.

Sen had in his address refereed to "a variety of ideas" provided by an ancient language like Sanskrit and said, "To reduce Sanskrit to a language of priests is a disaster."

"If I were to ask which is grand memorial of a building which memorises the mother of the first translator of the Upanishads, the answer would be Taj Mahal. Aurangzeb's brother Dara Shikoh was the first to translate the Upanishads into Persian from Sanskrit. A mughal prince had translated a Hindu text," Sen said.

The series of translations are spread across a vast array of Indian languages, including Bangla, Hindi, Kannada, Pali, Marathi, Punjabi, Persian, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

The five initial books offered by the library are "Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women", "Sufi Lyrics", "The History of Akbar: Volume 1", "The Story of Manu" and "Sur's Ocean."

Meanwhile Rohan Murty who made a contribution to his alma mater Harvard University when he was a doctoral student there

said, "I am very excited about the series. When people refer to classics I want them to know it is more than just the Greek and Latin ones."

The books have been printed with text in regional script alongside translation. Introductions, explanatory commentaries, textual notes, and clear, contemporary translations are provided.

Source | Press Trust of India, New Delhi

Digitisation in education

Many institutions in India are using technology and new pedagogy to improve the educational experience of students on their campuses or elsewhere. More such efforts are needed if India wants to bring in a revolution in the education sector.

The digital era has brought the most sweeping changes in scope and hope, if not yet, in depth and in immediate reality to education since the printing press. The primary manifestation of this over the last quarter of a century has been in the form of availability and ease of access to content from newspaper reports and social records to scholarly articles and literature. This has permeated education in many ways as students and teachers are no longer confined to the limited means of their own institutions. But more importantly this has created awareness among students and teachers that importance of mode of information as a means for growth has reduced significantly. Gathering information as a skill is now of the same importance as that of arithmetic skills in the post-calculator era. In these and many other ways, digitised access to information over the Internet and through mobile devices has become instrumental in democratising education in the broadest sense.

Until recently though, the impact of digitisation in classroom teaching had been minimal. For more than a decade the use of online learning platforms such as Blackboard and Moodle has been prevalent in some countries and has been becoming common if spotted in India. But they had remained supplementary tools to traditional classroom lecture formats. Also, educational institutions in India and abroad have been offering digitally-recorded lectures in the form of removable media earlier and over the Internet in the last decade. This has provided enhanced access to structured digital content for those who cannot physically attend an institution. More dramatic innovation has come in the form of flipping the classroom, i.e., providing lectures in recorded form to students beforehand to be absorbed at their own pace and convenience but engaging students in a classroom in activities that were traditionally expected of the student outside the classroom:

discussions, problem solving, peer collaboration, etc.

Institutions like IIT Bombay and BITS Pilani apart from others are using technology and new pedagogy to improve the educational experience of students on their campuses or elsewhere. Many more such efforts are needed if India were to leapfrog on the education front to this century as it did in the case of access to mobile phone services. It is the only way to nourish the large younger generation of this nation which in turn is the only hope for the nation to go forward.

The writer is Professor of Computer Science and Dean of Academic & Resource Planning at BITS Pilani Views expressed are personal.

Source | Times of India | 7 January 2015

A Library for fishing community

The Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation is setting up 31 libraries, totally costing Rs 9.60 crore, across the state for the benefit of fishing community.

The Integrated Development of Fishing Villages Scheme focuses on basic infrastructure development, provision of drinking water, sanitation, electrification, setting up of libraries and livelihood support programmes in 57 selected fishing villages in the state.

Fisheries minister, K Babu, said the coporation will construct a two-storied library at nearby Edavanakkad costing Rs 51 lakh for the fishing community. The foundation stone of was laid by the minister yesterday.

The corporation is setting up 31 libraries at an overall project outlay of Rs 9.60 crore in the state, he said.

The Edavanakkad library, spread over 113 square metres, will have an office room, a reading room and a wash room on the ground floor and a hall on the first floor, and is being built under the state government's Integrated Development of Fishing Villages Scheme for the benefit of the fishing community.

In Ernakulam district, the Corporation is building libraries at five fishing villages - Edavanakkad, Kumbalam, Pallippuram, Udayamperoor and Manassery -- at a cost of Rs 1.77 crore.

Source | Business Standard | 21 January 2015

NEH and Mellon Foundation Subsidize Ebook Conversions

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation partnered for theHumanities Open Book Program, a joint pilot grant program that plans to facilitate the conversion of out-of-print

books in the humanities into freely accessible ebooks.

According to the NEH, the majority of academic books in history, literature, philosophy, art, music, and other humanities fields published in the past 100 years are out of print, and thus unavailable to teachers, students, and general readers. With this grant program, the organizations' goal is to republish these titles so anyone in the world can download them under a Creative Commons license.

To be chosen for the program, academic presses, scholarly societies, museums, and other institutions can submit proposals to the NEH with a list of their previously published humanities titles (among other information) by June 10, 2015. The NEH and the Mellon Foundation will award grants so the suitable books can be converted into EPUB format, allowing for fully searchable, reflowable text; the ability to adjust font sizes; and compatibility with most mobile devices and e-readers.

Source | National Endowment for the Humanities

Delhi University to launch MOOCs by end of this month

The Delhi University is about to launch its series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) by the end of this month, reports the Times of India. The courses will be open and accessible worldwide and will be provided free of cost.

The first MOOC course will start on January 30th in a series called 'India in the 21st century', which will include 10 lectures with all of them to be delivered by the Vice Chancellor of the University Dinesh Singh. The University will also provide offline interactive facilities at four colleges, including Aryabhatta College, Maharaja Agrasen College, IP College for Women and Keshav Mahavidyalaya.

Students participating in the MOOC will be provided with a certificate for the non-credit courses although the approval for this is to be yet granted by the varsity's Academic Council (AC) which is meeting today. The course itself can be accessed by students and members of Delhi University through the University's internet network.

Last month, IIT Kanpur had mentioned that it was developing its own platform for MOOCs called MOOKIT. Under MOOKIT, the institution said it will develop MOOCs around verticals like agriculture and computer science among others.

Similarly the HRD Ministry's own MOOC platform SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), which was expected to launch by the end of last year, had signed a Joint Declaration of Intent with the US Department of State to have US universities offer online courses through its platform. At the time of launch SWAYAM is expected to have three different courses – two from IIT Bombay and one

from UC Berkeley's Umesh Vazirani. Currently, all these courses are available on edX, an MIT and Harvard backed MOOC provider.

The National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) had also launched a new e-learning course in association with IIT and IISc, in March last year. The program is powered by Google's open-source MOOC platform Course Builder, and it runs on App Engine and Compute Engine. As we had mentioned then, the government already has an open education website in NROER, so it's not clear why NPTEL exists as a separate website at all.

The Indian Government also operates Sakshat, as part of its national mission on education through ICT. All services provided on this website, such as e-books, virtual classes and testing services, are available freely under the creative commons license.

Source
| http://www.medianama.com/

Google gets competition in now search engine

Finnish researchers have developed a new search engine that outperforms current ones and helps people search more efficiently.

Developed at the Helsinki Institute for Information Technology HIIT, the SciNet search engine is different because it changes internet searches into recognition tasks by showing keywords related to the user's search in topic radar.

People using SciNet can get relevant and diverse search results faster, especially when they do not know exactly what they are looking for or how to formulate a query to find it.It is often hard for people to put what they are looking for into words.Their search needs often do not become more focused until they begin the actual search.

"The SciNet search engine solves these problems. It is easier for people to recognise what information they want from the options offered by the SciNet search engine than it is to type it themselves," explained project's coordinator Tuukka Ruotsalo.

Once initially queried, SciNet displays a range of keywords and topics in a topic radar. With the help of the directions on the radar, the engine displays how these topics are related to each other. The relevance of each keyword is displayed as its distance from the centre point of the radar – those more closely related are nearer to the centre, and those less relevant are farther away.

The search engine also offers alternatives that are connected with the topic, but which the user might not have thought of querying. By moving words around the topic radar, users

specify what information is most useful for them.

The paper was published in the journal Communications of the ACM.

Source | http://freepressjournal.in/

JNU launches Google-like search engine for its students

The Jawaharlal Nehru University has launched a Google-like single window search option in its central library, enabling students and teachers to access all resources, including books, newspapers and research material.

The varsity's Vice-Chancellor S K Sopory launched the service, known as EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS), at the inaugural session of a seminar titled 'Transforming University Libraries'.

"With relevancy-ranked results and an abundant amount of customisation options will allow JNU faculty and students and its research scholars, focus on The quality of the information found rather than spending time and energy on searching multiple resources.

"Only few very select academic institutes in India have facilities for single window search," the university said in a statement.

This service linked with remote access facilities will enable students and teachers access the search option from their cellphones, tablets and laptops.

The university librarian, Ramesh C Gaur said, "We wanted to find a service that would remove the barrier of having to figure out which databases to search so the library becomes more familiar and user-friendly."

This service will also enable students search information across 72 online databases, library catalogue, 20,000 electronic theses and dissertations, 8 lakh digital press clippings, 2,300 e-newspapers in 57 languages from 100 countries and over 2 lakh e-books, and all e-journals.

Earlier discovery services were on trial for the last year-and-a-half, he said.A new JNU library website and several other websites were also launched on the occasion.

Source | http://computer.financialexpress.com/