



Meeting Makers Where They Are: Scrappy Strategies for Supporting Adults in Pursuing Their Desired Outcomes

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Today's Session

1. New research-backed maker outcomes framework
2. Library-tested strategies for supporting adult makers
 - a. Chicago Public Library
 - b. Small libraries in CO and IL
3. Applying the framework in your work

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Making activities in public libraries



- Expanding opportunities for makerspace participation
- Creating inclusive environments
- Fostering a sense of belonging

Chang et al, 2019; Koh & Teasdale, 2026
Lakind et al., 2019

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

Cun et al., p. 40

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How can public libraries...

- Equitably support adults' varying priorities and values?
- Evaluate their programs and services in light of makers' differing interests and needs?
- Identify improvements to better serve their communities?



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Our team



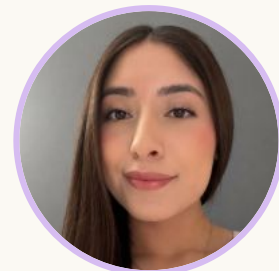
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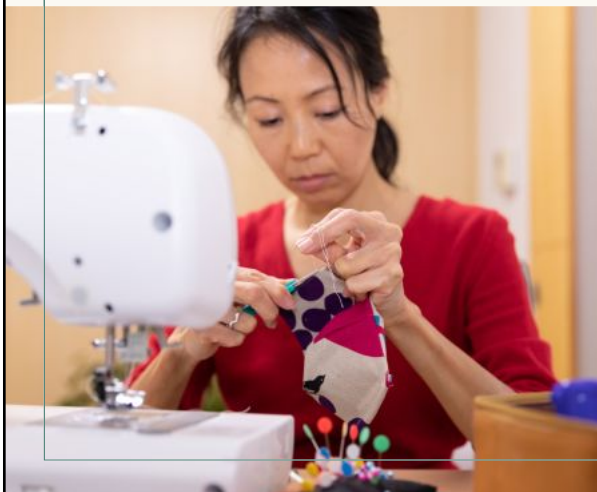
Our partners



This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services LG-254863-OLS-23

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Our research



- 21 focus groups in 6 public libraries serving diverse communities
- Participants included:
 - 62 adult makers
 - 29 staff members
- Documented broad spectrum of benefits adults seek and achieve in public library making activities

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11 key outcomes

- Potential outcomes of adult participation
- Desired and actual outcomes depend on each maker's unique interests, priorities, activities, and goals

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Ruben

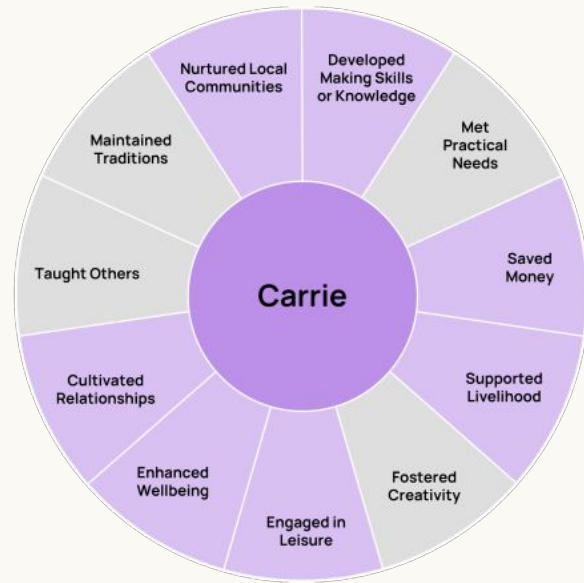
- Latino musician in his 30s
- Uses his public library to record music and build electronic musical equipment

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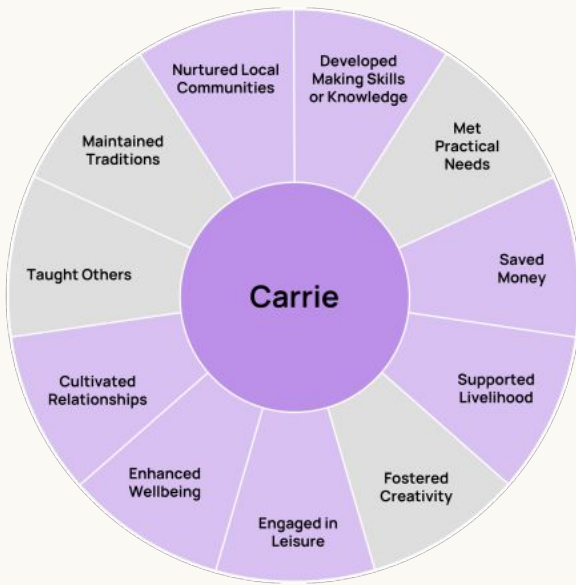
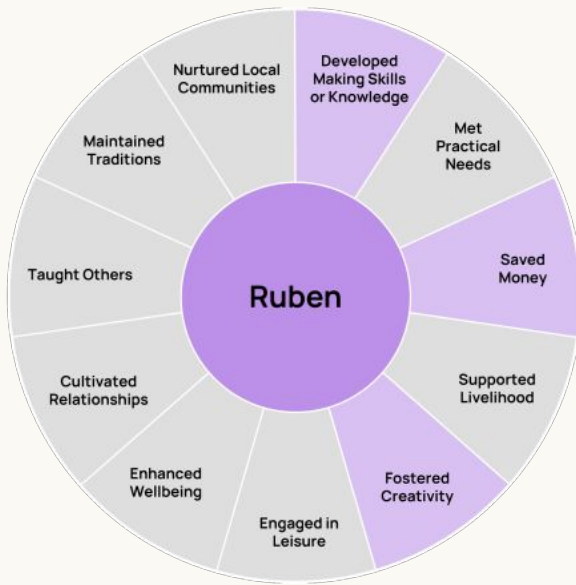
Carrie

- Black woman in her 40s, avid crafter who works in the legal system
- Visits her public library makerspace multiple times a week to take classes and work on craft projects



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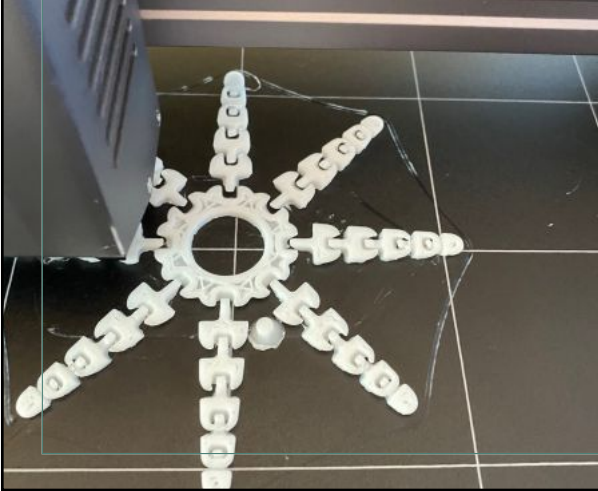
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Using the framework



- Identify outcomes that are most relevant for specific makers and communities
- Assess alignment between makers' values and library offerings
- Develop services and train staff to support varying priorities
- Communicate the broad range of outcomes makers prioritize

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Scrappy strategies:

Chicago Public
Library

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Megan Greenback

Assistant Director
Legler Regional


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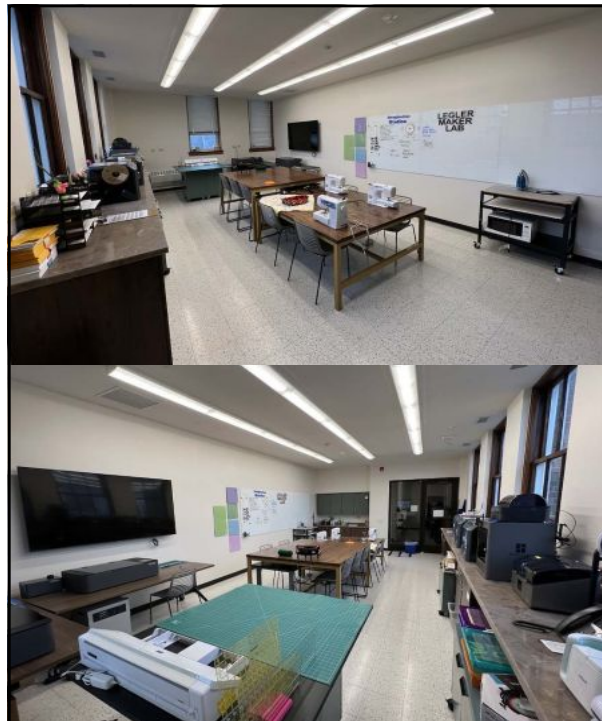
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In addition to traditional library services, Legler offers:

- Digital Literacy Navigator
- Free Clothing Closet
- Seed Exchange Library
- Artist-in-Residence
- Food Pantry



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Legler's Maker Lab

- 3-D printers
- Laser cutters
- Heat press
- Button maker
- Sublimation printer
- Cricut
- Sewing machines
- Crafting opportunities such as jewelry making, candle making, rug tufting, and more
- 3-4 programs monthly
- Aim for 15 hours of Open Shop programming monthly

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Supported Livelihood

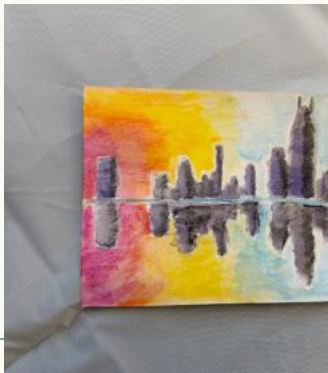
"It's so convenient to take a variety of classes [at the library] and learn a variety of things that maybe you would not have thought of on your own, or maybe they're not offered locally in an easy-to access place for people who are not in college..."




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Enhanced Wellbeing

- "I enjoy learning a lot. I'm a senior citizen. I think that when you stop learning, you stop living."
- "I went to the library and did it and felt, 'Oh wow, you were able to do this.' Then I felt proud of myself."
- "I feel like they build a confidence in you here at this library....they want you to feel relaxed."



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Met Practical Need

- "I would say the bags...where you go to water parks and they're requiring you to bring clear bags with zippers on them. You see them online...,but [an instructor] could just show you how to make them, zippers and everything."
- "I certainly would be very interested in clothing repair."
- "I really would want to learn how to make a shoe or a boot or a sandal."

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Scrappy Strategies at Chicago Public Library

| Listen | Partner | Expand Access | Adapt | Mobile Makers |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| With limited budgets and staff resources, take time to listen to your makers – let their interests drive the programming! | Form partnerships with fellow non-profits to help decrease supply costs, equipment maintenance costs, etc. | Create equipment manuals and recorded project tutorials to provide patrons with access even when we are experiencing staff shortages. | Adapt Maker programs into mini Maker kits for outreach and passive programming. | Take the maker equipment on the move – invest in mobile storage. |

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Scrappy strategies:

Small libraries in Colorado and Illinois

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Overview of the Small Libraries



In our research, we included three libraries that were based in rural or suburban areas in Colorado and Illinois.

These libraries served a population of 8,000 to 22,000 people.

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Outcome: Saved Money

Strategies practiced at libraries to facilitate this outcome:

- Providing makers with free software and materials (with limits)
- Taking requests for materials needed for maker projects
- Accepting donations and crowd-sourcing materials needed for specific projects

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Outcome: Cultivated Relationships

Strategies practiced at libraries to facilitate this outcome:

- Integrated makerspace activities with other library offerings
- Supported groups and activities organized by the makers
- Fostered a flexible environment for low-tech maker engagements

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Outcome: Taught Others

Strategies practiced at libraries to facilitate this outcome:

- Hiring volunteer instructors from among the makers
- Creating opportunities for makers to share their own skills and cultural traditions or practices
- Offering intergenerational spaces and activities

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Applying the framework

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Individual reflection

- How does the outcomes framework align with your experiences (as a staff member or a maker)?
- How might you use this framework to develop or enhance inclusive, responsive maker services for adults?



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Small group discussion (same questions!)



- How does the outcomes framework align with your experiences (as a staff member or a maker)?
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Free Public Library
Association webinar
July 14, 1:00-2:00 CDT






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Thank you!

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