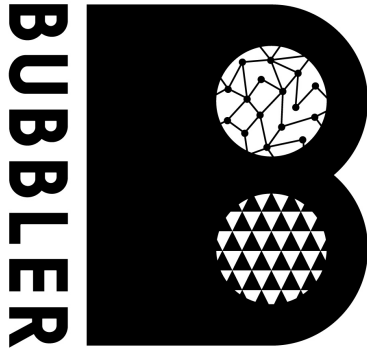


## Makerspace Playbook Site Survey: The Bubbler at Madison Public Library

March 2015



### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name:** Trent Miller

**Title:** “Head Bubblerarian” or more officially Library Program Coordinator

**Personal social media:** Twitter: @tmiller49

### ORGANIZATION

**Organization Name:** The Bubbler

**How would you describe your organization type (library, museum, school, community organization, etc.)?** Library

The Bubbler at Madison Public Library is a maker-focused program for all ages offering hands-on workshops and events from community experts.

**Organization website:** <http://madisonbubbler.org/>

**Organization social media links:** <https://www.facebook.com/madisonbubbler>

**Blog and/or site most related to programming, making:** <http://madisonbubbler.org/>

**Organization news/ publicity links:**

Our publicity is mostly on the Bubbler website, Facebook, or [www.madisonpubliclibrary.org](http://www.madisonpubliclibrary.org).

We also often have publicity in the CapTimes (<http://host.madison.com/ct/>) or the Isthmus (<http://www.isthmus.com/>).

**Location (city, state):** Madison, Wisconsin

**Is your organization rural, urban, or suburban?** Urban

**Is your space and/or elements of your programming mobile? Elaborate, if necessary.**

Yes! The Bubbler is a program that is system-wide, meaning it is not tied to any one space, although we do have a flexible maker room for programming and a media lab at the Central Library. Bubbler programming happens at all nine neighborhood library branches in Madison, scheduled by librarians at each location and promoted system-wide on Bubbler social media sites.

The Bubbler focuses on people, not equipment. By hiring local artists to come and teach their craft, we create “maker spaces” in conference rooms, community rooms, and right in the middle of the library. Madison has a flourishing artistic community; we simply provide the space and opportunity for those artists to share with the public.

**Target audience(s):**

All ages. We have Bubbler junior classes for children and families, adult programs and classes, teen programs and classes, and all-ages classes where generations mingle over making.

**Annual budget (indicate if public or not public):** Currently primarily grant funded so varies (National Endowment for The Arts and Institute of Museum and Library Services)

**Percentage free and reduced lunch served (if known):** N/A

**Access: Is your organization open to public, age restricted (elaborate below), membership-based, free, and/or admission required? Are there specific groups that you serve?**

Every Bubbler class is free and open to the public. For several of our more popular programs, we ask that people register to allow artists to know how many to prepare for. Other classes, especially in our media lab, are drop-in classes. Depending on the content or class, there are age recommendations.

**Tell us about your organization. What distinguishes you from others?**

The Bubbler is special in its system-wide approach and its community focus. Without the artists and people of Madison who wish to share what they make, the Bubbler would not exist. We allow artists and experts the spaces to share at the Central library, but also in their specific neighborhood branches. We also take the Bubbler to those who are unable to come to us. Specifically, the Bubbler teen programs serve court involved teens in the Dane county juvenile detention center and juvenile shelter. By expanding beyond one location, we are better able to reach the diverse community of Madison.

## MAKING AND CORE VALUES

### **What is your mission statement?**

We share Madison Public Libraries' vision and mission of "Learn. Share. Create."

### **What does it mean to "make" in your space/organization?**

To "make" at the Bubbler means lots of things. It means screen printing; it means cheese making; it means performance art; it means sock puppet monsters; it means tinkering and circuit making; it means digital audio recording, video editing, and video game design; it means after-hours parties with local bands, authors, and artists. The Bubbler is a reflection of the Madison community, the artists and experts who live here and want to share their talents and skills anyone who wants to learn.

### **How does the above relate (or not relate) to your core values?**

The Bubbler at Madison Public Library is the embodiment of "Learn. Share. Create."

### **Are you influenced by any particular pedagogies (approaches to learning)?**

We prioritize people over equipment. While we do have a media lab with amazing technology that was created with our start-up grant, moving forwards, we would rather pay artists to share than to invest in equipment.

Madison is also already home to two (and possible more in the future) makerspaces with access to more advanced technology and materials. When a makerspace with a 3D printer, industrial sewing machines, or a welding pit is available, we can focus on filling other gaps.

### **What are some good examples of especially powerful/ambitious/successful making experiences?**

For the last year we have had a very successful artist-in-residence program. We invite a local artist to use the Bubbler space at the Central Madison Public Library as a studio for one to three months. The artist works in the space that is open to the public for questions and interactions, teaches classes in their work, and creates art in the space and the library. We have had a printmaker, a bookmaker, a woodworker, a performance artist. Initially, these artists were those known by the program coordinator and previous partners for programs, but we are expanding the program to an application-based system in the upcoming months.

## GOALS

### **What are the goals of the programming and experiences provided?**

We strive to have a variety of programs for a variety of ages that invite learning through making. We are hoping to expand the number of programs into the neighborhood libraries to make the system-wide approach more sustainable in the long term.

### **How do your environment, tools, and materials reflect these goals?**

The Bubbler maker room at Central Library is open to the public during all hours that the library is open. By offering a variety of classes for a variety of ages, for free, all focused on making at the

Bubbler (but also in neighborhood libraries), we hope to increase our scope and reach the Madison population.

**How do you know when you've met your goals? What are your metrics of success?**

We are extremely excited to be working with researchers from the University of Wisconsin Madison through our current IMLS grant to gather data about our reach, our success, and the learning happening in Bubbler programs for the next two years. While we have previously recorded our metrics through attendance numbers and numbers of programs, we will actually have significant data about what kind of learning is happening in our spaces and the impact on the community.

**What are your plans and hopes for the future of your space and programming?**

We hope to make our system-wide approach sustainable beyond the scope of our grant-based system currently in place. We also hope to adjust our class/program structure based on the data gathered from the IMLS research study to create the most impactful model of learning through making.

## **TOOLS**

**What are your most frequently used and commonly available tools? (Anything used to make with, no matter how simple. Scissors count!)**

Scissors! Glue (both hot and tacky)! Paper! Markers! Crayons! Button makers! We have a full screen-printing setup with light box, screens, drying rack, wash-out station, and all the ink and paper imaginable. We are also building out tinkering materials with circuit blocks.

In our media lab we have twenty up-and-working animation stations with iPads that are portable to take to youth programs around Madison. We have ten traveling laptops with UDK game design, map-making software, and other programs. We have ten computer stations in the media lab with video-editing tools, Adobe Suites, UDK, and other programs, as well as a sound-recording booth with Pro Tools editing equipment.

**List any special tools that require supervision, training, and/or certification.**

Much of the equipment in the media lab is supervised and used/taught by expert volunteers and our media lab manager Nate Clark.

**What are the favorite tools (most popular/most desired, even if you don't have many, or just one)?**

We love our screen-printing setup; it's a big hit with all ages. Same goes for our animation stations.

**Are there any tools that go largely un-used, or that are no longer provided? Reasons?**

No, we try not to invest in tools that will not be utilized or that require expertise we cannot sustainably provide.

## MATERIALS

### **What are some of the most popular and frequently used materials?**

The button maker is extremely popular with both patrons and our librarians for a variety of programs. Our screen-printing materials are very well used. We have a screen-printing workshop once a month for three hours and they fill up incredibly quickly, months in advance. We have had screen-printing artists at several of our after-hours events, and they are always very popular.

### **What are some of your most interesting/unexpected materials?**

We've worked a lot with found and recycled materials. We have one artist who collected 3,000 Tetra Pak boxes for a large art piece.

### **What are the most continually reused materials? Most consumed?**

Paper and drawing supplies.

### **Share any specific or general sources for materials.**

We use the local art store, Artists and Craftsman, and also order through Amazon.com online.

## COLLABORATION

### **What are some of the institutions and organizations that are sources of inspiration, support, and influence?**

Locally we work with a lot of groups, including the two makerspaces in town: Sector67 and The Bodgery. We also work with UW-Madison departments, multiple art groups, and other like-minded thinkers and tinkerers. Nationally, we've connected to a lot of other libraries that are looking at similar programs, including 4th Floor at Chattanooga Public Library and The Pittsburgh Children's Museum. We also love art collectives and projects like Works Progress in Minneapolis and The Sketchbook Project in New York City.

### **Describe any local, national, and global partnerships and collaborations.**

Locally, we work with a lot of groups including schools, meet-up groups, tech organizations, performance art groups, music groups, The Wisconsin Book Festival, and on and on. Since this program is focused on these partnerships, the list is expansive. Nationally, we have worked on projects and grants with other organizations and groups and continue to connect with other partners on this level.

## SPACES AND ENVIRONMENT

### **In what physical places does making happen in your organization? A single dedicated space, multiple dedicated spaces, general use areas, a workshop (metal, wood, sewing, etc), outdoors, a theater, a music studio, an art studio? Everywhere? Somewhere else?**

We have a dedicated maker room at the Central Library that is officially called the Bubbler. The media lab is also located at the MPL Central Library. However, we use whatever space is available for workshops at the neighborhood libraries.

**How are the spaces, tools, and materials organized?**

The vast majority of our art supplies are out for the public to use. We have a collection of old card catalog drawers that we have labeled and filled with scissors, markers, crayons, spiral graphs, glue, you name it. We typically have at least one passive project set up in the Bubbler at all times. Right now, it is sticker paper with cutouts and art supplies to design your own stickers.

Specific materials are also used for specific projects. For example, materials for screen-printing or wooden art cars (wheels, blocks, permanent markers) are only used when classes are being led. In the media lab, we have open lab times, but then also specific class times when experts in audio engineering or game design are available to work with those tools.

**How large is the space(s) where making happens?**

In the Central Library, the Bubbler Room is 1100sq ft. , the Media Lab is 650sq ft., and the entire Central Library is 120,000 sq. ft.. Neighborhood libraries vary in size.

**Please describe how your site and makerspace(s) are staffed, including numbers of full and part-time staff and volunteers.**

We have a full-time media lab staff member and then several volunteer experts (anywhere from four to seven at a time) to teach classes. We also have a number of interns to assist (four to seven each semester from the university). We have one artist-in-residence, who is paid a stipend, in the Bubbler two days a week and offering at least one class a month. We have two librarians at each of the neighborhood libraries orchestrating their own programming. Each neighborhood library has a budget to do approximately twelve classes (\$1600 total: \$50 for 1 hour, \$100 for more than 1 hour, plus supplies paid to the performer) a year.

In the Bubbler office we have Trent, the program director, one project assistant from the university paid for thirteen hours a week, and up to five volunteers working on specific projects (art shows, design of publicity materials, archiving, grant writing, social media communication).

**First impressions of space(s):**

Ideally, when participants first enter the Bubbler, they see an open and inviting space with materials for creating. They hear the artist-in-residence at work. They feel comfortable and inspired to make. They experience the joy of creating. They leave with a sense of accomplishment and a piece of their design.

**PROGRAMMING****Describe the kinds of programming offered.**

In the media lab we offer open lab time as well as specific classes in game design, audio engineering, hip hop recording, video production etc.

In the Bubbler and neighborhood libraries, for example, in March alone we offered: a three-hour screen-printing workshop, a three-class creating writing series, a Wisconsin film festival mini festival of local film makers, a surrealist experiment performance participatory workshop, a

wooden art car workshop for children and families, a Picasso foil art workshop for children, a poetry reading with three visiting poets, a felting with wool class for adults, a self-portrait workshop, a drum circle for children, and a traditional Polish egg-decorating class.

### **How did your space and programming get started?**

When the Central Library was gutted in 2013 for a renovation, Trent, our founder, approached the director about having a party in the empty space. *Bookless* started as an idea for an art show in the empty library, with many of the arts using leftover remnants from the gutting, to a showing of over 100 local arts, participatory art for the Madison community to say goodbye to the old space, and a dance party in the basement. In one day, *Bookless* brought in over 5000 people and nearly \$30,000. It was evident to our new director that the Madison community appreciated the library as Madison's artistic hub.

From there, a space originally designated for a meeting room in the new renovation was reconceived as the Bubbler, and our maker program was created. Programs were piloted in the neighborhood libraries while the Bubbler awaited its new digs, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and IMLS allowed it to expand.

### **How do you decide on/design/make possible the space and components of the program?**

Prioritize people over equipment. The actual Bubbler space is a blank canvas. Rubber, easily cleanable floors, magnetic white boards, adjustable tables, artist stools, and art supplies. We wanted out artists-in-residence to be able to come in and make the space exactly what they wanted.

### **How has your environment and programming evolved? What has worked well and why? What has changed? What could still be improved?**

As we have evolved and become known, we are doing significantly less recruitment of artists and groups to present at the Bubbler. Rather, artists in the community who are excited to share their work are coming to us with program ideas and classes. Our night light events have become increasingly popular and our ability to promote them more successful as streamlined the process. And our artist-in-residence program has become more sustainable as we know what works with classes and sessions to make suggestions to our artists coming in. We are still hoping to improve our staffing obligations, especially at our neighborhood libraries, where responsibilities for programming are juggled with many other priorities.

## **EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY**

### **Are there segments of the population that you hope to serve better?**

Madison is a diverse community, but transportation to downtown can be difficult from specific areas, often those most underserved. This makes our programming in neighborhood libraries all the more essential.

### **What strategies do you employ to help increase the accessibility of your space/program to all learners?**

Our teen librarian noticed right away that it is hard to get teens into the library space, especially those teens with limited access, who may benefit the most from programming. He has dedicated



most of his time and Bubbler programming off campus in the juvenile detention center, juvenile shelter, local middle schools, community centers, and in neighborhood libraries. This outreach has been very successful, but to be sustainable and more consistent we are asking our university research team for help recreating the model.