HML
HUNTINGTON MEMORIAL
LIBRARY

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Digital Literacy Initiative Statement

The purpose of the Digital Literacy Initiative is to provide technology-based resources to Oneonta to better prepare our community for the technological world and to create a STEM-literate populace. Adding new technology to library services and programs will inspire our community to create, master new tools and gain a level of expertise that is important in an increasingly technological world. The aim of this new initiative supports the Huntington Memorial Library's mission statement, "*To provide a creative environment that supports life-long learning by making information freely available in order to improve knowledge and strengthen the community*".

Libraries have always seen life-long learning as a fundamental mission. As society continues to create adaptive changes, libraries continue to grow with the communities they serve. As technology takes a larger role in our society, it is our work to equalize the playing field by creating a Makerspace for Oneonta. Dale Dougherty, founder of MAKE magazine said, "Librarians are makers of spaces, keepers of resources shared by many, makers of a culture of learning." Makerspaces are fundamentally a technological leap beyond library knitting and quilting circles where patrons and experts can come together to learn new techniques and train others in a new skill. In the case of technology, the new tools are a lot flashier and certainly more expensive than a needle and thread. In fact, the cost of Makerspaces is what makes it so appealing to library patrons. What one person cannot afford to purchase for occasional use, the library can buy and share with the greater community.

The digital divide is still alive and well in our country and digital literacy services at the library are an important way to combat it. Pew Research Center states that overall, people aged 18-34 are more likely to use the internet, but those with less education use it 15 points less than those with more education. 84% of lower income people use the internet compared to 97% in higher income brackets. The divide is greater when looking at smart phone use. Equitable access to and participation in the online environment is essential for success in education, employment, finance, health and wellness, civic engagement, and a democratic society. It may be up to the public library to level the playing field and build digitally inclusive communities. There is no doubt that digital literacy is important now and will continue to be an essential component of jobs and communications in the future.

The National Research Council's Board on Science Education (2016) found that out-of-school programs have been shown to contribute to young people's interest in and understanding of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). These programs have been found to connect young people to caring adults who serve as role models and reduce the achievement gap. The STEM Education Coalition states that exposure to formal and informal learning in STEM subjects, beginning at an early age and continuing through high school prepares our nation's students for the future. In fact, they report that it is vital to our country's social and economic prosperity.

Project Users

The Huntington Memorial Library is meeting the needs of approximately 9,000 people in the area. City users make up 43% of users and 18% reside in the Town of Oneonta. The remaining 39% live outside the greater Oneonta area and many of them are Otsego County residents. Last year, there were more than 68,000 visits to our website. There were more than 14,000 uses of the public computer stations and approximately 13,500 uses of our free wireless internet access. Oneonta is a very "plugged in" community that has demonstrated a high level of technology usage at the library. In a recent survey, it was reported that 55% of patrons who visit the library used the public computer stations or the free wireless network. Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of Huntington Memorial Library, the number of public computer stations was increased last year and they continue to be heavily used.

According to Pew Research Center, 73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners. 74% of adults are considered "personal learners" which means that have participated in at least one of a number of activities to advance their knowledge about a personal interest. The activities include reading, taking courses or attending meetings and events. The internet is typically cited as the primary source of learning but more learners pursue knowledge in physical settings than online. Personal learners are more likely to report that they learn in a library, high school or place of worship 52-81% of the time as opposed to using the internet.

Today, the American Library Association (ALA) and Google, Inc. are launching the "Libraries Ready to Code" project to investigate the current nature of coding activities for youth and to broaden the reach and scope of the work. ALA President Sari Feldman states that, "Libraries today are less about what we have on our shelves and more about what we do for and with people in our schools, campuses and communities. Learning for children and youth today is more flexible, more self-directed, and with greater opportunities to not just use content, but to create and collaborate digitally. Library professionals are committed to facilitating both individual opportunity for all and advancing community progress. Feldman feels that "this new project with Google sits squarely in our modern public mission."

The targeted audience for the Digital Literacy Initiative encompasses a wide range of demographic descriptors. Public libraries serve the entire spectrum of ages from early childhood to senior citizens. According to the American Library Association, in libraries across the country, kids gather to make Lego robots, teens create digital music, movies and games with computers, students engineer new projects while adults create prototypes for small business products with laser cutters and 3D printers. The proliferation of micro-businesses that need cutting edge tools will find the technology at HML to fully support their endeavors. New skills can be established at the library that will benefit work force development. It is our goal at HML to support the need to create by providing cutting edge technology tools.

Program Opportunities and Benefits

The overall opportunity and benefits of the Digital Literacy Initiative is to increase the comfort level, skills and knowledge of technology tools by community members. Patrons will learn how to use an emerging technology with the support and training of library staff who will emphasize discovery learning. The wealth of collaboration with local colleges, businesses and other educators will enrich the overall efforts and will expand the outreach.

Other community STEM programs
- Carriage House Art Studio-2D and 3D fine art, MineCraft, SketchUp, Adobe Suite.
- Oneonta World of Learning (OWL)-hands-on learning including science kits, a few computers, STEM toys and activities.
- BOCES-3D printer and other STEM resources for schools.
- Robokronos-High School Robotics Club. 3D printer. Summer robotics camp for middle school.
- Catskill Area School Study Council-SUNY Oneonta enrichment programs including forensics and other STEM themes.
- Hanaford Mills Museum-is expanding STEM exhibits and runs STEM enrichment to some school districts through CROP contract.
- CDO STEM Council-group of educators, business owners who work together to build STEM programming. Run a 1-week summer camp.
- SUNY Discovery Center-currently renovating a new space for their interactive STEM collection.
- Oneonta Boys & Girls Club-has unused woodworking shop.
- 4-H-big push for STEM at National level

Costs and Risks

The Digital Literacy Initiative comes with risks. The community demand may be less than we expect based on results from other libraries or the demand may outstrip our resources. HML staff members will be trained at a basic level and more than one staff member will have expertise for each technology tool but with high demand, we may not be able to fulfill our obligations. The primary audience for this program is unknown at this time. Will they predominantly be beginners or experienced technology users? Will the youth or adult audience be more responsive to innovative programming? For most patrons, this initiative will create an opportunity that they might not otherwise have.

To reduce the risks, HML staff will continue to survey users and non-users and will hold informational meetings. Before the hard launch of some projects, an invitation to an Interest Meeting will be extended to the community to gauge interest. A Steering Committee has been developed and is populated with members with a high level of expertise both in digital/technology tools and in education. The Steering Committee will represent the community at large, will assist in setting priorities and will aid in widespread outreach efforts. During the important first year of planning and piloting projects, the committee will meet quarterly.

Projects

Plans have been developed that include goals and outcomes, descriptions, implementation, stakeholders and other important information for initial efforts. To date, plans have been written for the 3D Printing Project, Tech and Art Kits, the MineCraft Project and the overall, children's STEAM Program.

Goals of the 3D Printing Project
1. To foster creativity, invention and innovation through 3D design.
2. To use 3D printing as a way to increase collaboration and partnership opportunities with the community.
3. To increase local business owners' use of library technology resources.

Goals of the Tech and Art Kits
1. To provide self-directed learning opportunities for patrons.
2. To provide increased access to technology tools.

Goal of the Children's STEAM Project
1. To create an inspiring and fun environment for learning where children acquire hands-on experience utilizing all aspects of STEAM.

Goals of the Minecraft Project
1. Participants will increase their computer literacy and become aware of other resources available at the library.
2. Minecraft will provide participants with a positive experience while learning about digital technology that focuses on elements of STEAM education in a discovery-based learning environment.