

WHAT SLQ THE EDGE HAS LEARNED ON THE WAY TO A FAB LAB LIBRARY

The Edge is State Library of Queensland's model of the library of the future. Launched in 2010, it's enabling Queenslanders to explore their creativity across art, science, technology and enterprise. DANIEL FLOOD, the creative production manager at The Edge, tells us how this experimental space is helping Queenslanders to explore the outer limits of their creative selves.

State Library of Queensland, through The Edge, has been working in the maker and fabrication spaces of libraries for a while now; it's what The Edge does and what you do when you're billed as the library of the future – you look to the future. We were working in the makerspace before 3D printers were commonplace and have been long involved in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and maths).

Amid all that working and doing, we've learned a lot about what to do and what not to do when starting a fabrication lab or makerspace. Here are the three most important things – in no particular order – we've learned in our journey towards a fabrication lab. Some of them are victories, others not, but all of them have been learned by doing, which is what you do when you're an experiential learning space.

1. It's all about the people, the staff and the community using your makerspace. You can have all the wonderful gadgets and the best location, but if you don't know how to use them or how to engage the community with them, it's not going to work. Your team is going to be constantly learning and evolving with the technology; it will change the way they do their work in ways no-one foresees. The community will be constantly challenging the space and its use. Be ready to support them through that change and watch out for what they're looking for because ...

2. It's all about need. Not the perceived need or one that hasn't been properly interrogated but a genuine need of the community. No two makerspaces are the same anywhere, even those built from the same design (such as Fab Lab or Hackerspace or TechShop). We at SLQ The Edge have visited many makerspaces and know first-hand what they look like in other libraries. The best are those where the library has explored *with* their community what they need out of a makerspace – not assuming and doing it for them. It's easier to do that, but the resultant spaces are almost



Creative Community Computing Digital Literacy program for marginalised communities



Flying Arts ARTIZDigital Program at The Edge

certainly doomed to gather dust alongside the corpses of so many digital media labs scattered across the world.

3. It's all about the sharing. Whatever you create with the community should be shared with the broader community – especially other libraries working in the space. If you come up with a good idea, publish it under a Creative Commons licence and dare someone to do better. Don't be afraid of having a good idea stolen; be certain of it. Accept that fact and move on to the next idea, then the next, and then the next. The idea of what a makerspace is evolves on a daily basis and it's your ideas – your sharing – that fuels that change. Be a part of that change.

Six years into this makerspace experiment and there have been tears, learning, opportunity, curiosity, whimsy and awe – happening continually. If you're ever in Brisbane and you haven't already visited SLQ The Edge, come and see. Come and make something – because making is what it's all about. 🌟

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🐦 @SLQEdge

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