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Emerging Technology Planning – Fixit Clinic

By Ashton Vagnone in [Uncategorized](#) on October 22, 2017. / [Edit](#)

Introduction

A few weeks ago, Professor Stephens shared an *American Libraries* article about [Repair Cafes](#) and I commented briefly about my interest in kick-starting a similar program at Sacramento Public Library (SPL) where I currently work. In my comment, I told the story of how one of the teens attending my gaming tournament program got too excited and ended up breaking the disc tray of our Wii, cutting festivities short. He felt incredibly guilty for both breaking the console and being the cause of the tournament being cancelled. I offered him the opportunity to help me fix the Wii, hoping it would cheer him up a bit and give him an avenue to right a wrong. It ended up being a mutual learning and bonding experience. Neither of us knew how to fix a Wii, but we reasoned through it together. When the tray was finally fixed, it was a point of pride for both of us.

Purpose and Benefits

The experience above showed me the potential that fix-it programs have to bring communities together through an educational and cooperative effort to learn about an object and get it back to working order. The Fixit Clinic would teach valuable STEM skills to young people; allow different people in the community to meet each other and work on a project together; facilitate the transfer of skills from professionals to beginners and novices; help build real-world mechanical skills; promote sustainability in our communities; and increase awareness of library services and collections, among many other benefits.

In other words, it's the perfect participatory service for the library. Like Professor Stephens' (n.d.) example of the program that brought comic book creators and comic enthusiasts together to inspire and learn from each other, this program would encourage people from all walks of life with varying skill levels to put their heads together, tackle a problem, and learn from/with each other. Libraries are uniquely suited to promote this type of collaboration as is described by Michael Casey (2016) in his talk on [Civic Engagement and Participatory Learning](#). Through these programs, we can “connect student with teachers and mentors” (Casey, 2016) so that “people who wouldn't normally cross paths are being brought together by the library...using library resources and spaces to connect and build what will eventually become very very rewarding relationships” (Casey, 2016).

Details about the library

SPL already has established makerspaces in a few of our branches, as well as a Library of Things that currently includes sewing machines and can be expanded to also include tools. We also have external Bike Fix-it stations in various locations. As we pilot most of our new and innovative programs at the Arcade branch, and since Arcade has the most robust Makerspace in the system (which includes a soldering station and sewing machine), it would be the ideal branch at which to test run a Fixit Clinic. In the future, the Martin Luther King Jr. Library could also be a candidate considering it has both a 3D printer (though not a Makerspace) and a Bike Fixit Station outside. With the 3D printer, a fix-it program would fit thematically with the library's offerings. The Fixit Clinic would be a logical step for both branches given their current services and collections, and the fact that they already have staff and volunteers dedicated to the running and maintenance of the Makerspace / 3D printers.

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Goals/Objectives for Technology or Service:

1. Provide a participatory, hands-on learning experience for new, beginning, and novice fixers.
2. Facilitate knowledge transfer between experienced fixers and new, beginning, and novice fixers.
3. Promote STEM principles in our communities by allowing people to better understand how things function.
4. Encourage the use of existing emerging technology at the library, e.g. by 3D-printing parts that might be needed in order to fix a broken object.
5. Increase awareness of the library's lesser-known services, including Bike Fix-it stations and Library of Things offerings, like sewing machines.
6. Demonstrate the value of the library through our shared resources.
7. Support sustainability in our communities.

Description of Community you wish to engage: We would want people from the general public to bring in their broken items, so the program would be open to everyone in that sense. Secondary target populations would include tinkering enthusiasts, established trade professionals (tailors, repairmen, engineers, etc.), up-and-coming professionals (e.g. students in engineering programs at local colleges or CSUS), and members of the community who are interested in sustainability.

Action Brief Statement:

For patrons:

Convince users and non-users that by attending / utilizing the Fixit Clinic they will learn and benefit from the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of their community which will help them learn practical skills, create lasting relationships, explore new technologies, and contribute to a sustainable society because the library is a place for learning, giving back, and connecting.

For staff:

Convince library staff and administrators that by offering Fixit Clinics through the library they will enrich the lives of their patrons by offering practical services and fun learning opportunities which will increase awareness of the value of the library because patrons will be exposed to the multitude of services and materials that the library offers.

Evidence and Resources to support Technology or Service: (URLS, articles to help guide you)

How-to's:

Cottrell, M. (2017, September 1). [Libraries and the art of everything maintenance: Hosting repair events reduces](#)

waste, brings in new patrons.

Fixit Clinic. (n.d.). [Start a clinic](#).

Informational

Schimpf, C. (2017, February 16). [Fix it at the library with DIY repair programs](#).

Examples at other libraries

Arlington Public Library. (2016, October). [Maker workshop: Fix nearly anything](#).

Cotton, D. (2017, October 2). [Fix it, don't ditch it at Buffalo's Dare to Repair Cafe!](#)

Dakota County. (2017, September 18). [Fix & repair](#).

Lyons, K. (2015, September 17). [Why buy new? Fix what you have! Fixit clinics coming to the library's Recycled Reads bookstore](#).

Martel, D. (2016, October 14). [The fix is free: Programs that pop](#). *Library Journal*.

Mission, Guidelines, and Policy related to Technology or Service: The Fixit Clinic will have to adhere to standing [SPL policies](#) in regards to collection, conduct, and 3D printing, and must remain in line with the library's [Mission, Vision, values, and goals](#). Additionally, we have internal policies that govern how volunteers are onboarded, and any new Fixit Clinic volunteers (called "coaches") must be vetted through that process. Arcade has its own policies for the Makerspace, which will also apply. As for policies and guidelines that will be unique to this service, Fixit Clinic is an umbrella non-profit that helps other non-profits create new repair programs nationwide. In that respect, we are fortunate to have an archive and resource to turn to when deciding how to approach recruitment, marketing, scope, and so on. The [Fixit Clinic website](#) is a great tool for this, and we can also contact featured libraries that have held similar programs in the past. All new policies will be subject to our normal policy review via the branch management chain, and escalated to central administration if needed.

Funding Considerations for this Technology or Service: While the Library of Things has some shareable resources (e.g. sewing machines) that can be used for this program, the library might consider also purchasing a set of tools for a few hundred dollars when it next decides how to allocate the collection budget. It would benefit not only this service, but the system as a whole. As Kastanis (2015) noted in this week's readings, "We've recently seen a huge rise in the sharing economy" that allows resources to "be active 24/7 rather than just when we're personally using them", and this can be a justification for the purchase. Alternatively, Arcade has a generous and thriving Friends group to which a request for purchase can be submitted.

If the purchasing of library-owned tools isn't feasible, the Fixit Clinic website recommends asking volunteer coaches to bring their own personal tools so they have them available when attempting to help patrons fix their objects. Other costs incurred would be the purchase of odds and ends, such as washers, screws, ball bearings, small spare parts, and any of the plastic that might be used if the library ends up 3D printing these parts. The latter will likely already be accounted for in the branch budget due to regular use of the Makerspace.

If the branch considers partnerships with other non-profits and community organizations, donations of all required program materials would be very feasible.

Action Steps & Timeline: The service can be piloted at the Arcade branch and then replicated at other branches if it's successful. The program could be up-and-running in about 3 – 6 months, depending on how successful recruitment is of internal staff or external volunteers to be Fixit Coaches, and how quickly the library can purchase any tools or parts deemed necessary for the clinic. The project flow and approval chain will likely be as follows:

1. Project is pitched to the Arcade Branch Supervisor, whose approval will greenlight the service at the branch level **[1 week]**.

2. Arcade Branch Supervisor presents the idea to the Public Services Manager (regional manager) to determine if there are any admin concerns with the program **[1 week]**. Once approval is granted...
3. Branch must decide whether to put in a purchase request to the Collection Services Department or Friends of the Arcade Library for general tools and parts **[1 month]** OR whether we will ask volunteer Fixit Coaches to bring their own tools **[no time]**.
4. Branch must decide what, if anything, on the [recommended supply list](#) will be necessary to purchase to run the program **[1 month]**
5. Fixit Coach recruitment will begin via our normal avenues: in-house flyers, SPL's website, social media **[up to 2 months]**
 1. Coaches will go through volunteering training once they agree to help with the program **[up to 2 months, concurrent with 4.]**
6. Library staff can seek out community partnerships with local churches, schools, colleges, universities, non-profit groups, clubs, etc. **[optional, up to 2 months]**
7. Once volunteers have been recruited, a target date and time will be chosen for the first clinic **[1 day]**.
 1. Depending on the scope of the volunteers' skills, the branch can decide whether or not to limit the types of objects can be brought to the Fixit Clinic.
8. The service will be marketed via in-house flyers, SPL's website, social media, outreach at schools and events, and the Fixit Clinic's blog **[up to 1 month]**.
9. The first Fixit Clinic is held **[4 hours]**!
10. Evaluation period

Staffing Considerations for this Technology or Service: Arcade will have a Library Assistant and one or two volunteers already dedicated to running and maintaining the branch's Makerspace. The Repair Cafe pilot can be an extension of normal Makerspace hours, or replace one instance of an existing program. Additional volunteer Fixit coaches will be recruited prior to the actual program date (see action steps above) by the branch's Adult Volunteer Coordinator as part of their regular duties. Teens and college students can be enticed with volunteer hours and experience to help out with the program.

The only additional staff hours required would possibly be to establish partnerships with community organizations or professionals. I would estimate this to be between 2 – 4 hours of staff time a week until the go-live date. This is optional, but can be done by being creative with scheduling to allow a staff member enough time off-desk and away from other duties to email, call, or visit potential partners. The branch can also utilize our robust roster of on-call staff to cover if necessary.

Training for this Technology or Service: Branch staff and regular volunteers will already be familiar with the Makerspace machines. Any new volunteers onboarded specifically for this clinic will need to go through the branch's standardized volunteer training session (about two hours). Otherwise, the branch will rely on the expertise of the Fixit Coaches for specific troubleshooting and fixing of objects brought in.

If the service is successful and the branch ends up making it an ongoing program, there will likely be regulars who can be tapped to be Fixit Coaches down the road. As the Fixit Clinic blog states, "Many of our best Fixit Coaches initially attended as participants" (Fixit Clinic, n.d.).

If other branches move to adopt Fixit Clinics at their own sites, the original team at Arcade can provide a short training session for interested parties on how best to implement and run the service.

Promotion & Marketing for this Technology or Service: To market to the public, all of SPL's basic marketing strategies will be used, including in-house flyers, advertising on the website, social media posts, and word-of-mouth at the branch's service desk. Beyond that, once the service has been greenlighted by the appropriate supervisors, the branch can send out a system-wide email requesting that the Fixit Clinic be promoted at all outreach events prior to the go-live date. SPL is always tabling at different events, so this will help get the word out and hopefully encourage the public to bring in their broken objects. The library should also consider partnerships with the engineering programs at the local Los Rios community college campuses, as well as California State University, Sacramento. One of our other branches, Pocket Library, serves as a joint-library with the 7th – 12th grade School of Engineering and Sciences, which would also be a great way to bring in younger, aspiring engineers to participate and coach.

The Fixit Clinic website also recommends seeking out non-profits focused on sustainability, and to “Spread the word that you want to start holding Fixit Clinics through local libraries, schools, community centers, senior centers, city government, chamber of commerce, hardware stores, computer / electronics stores, bicycle stores, churches, etc.” (Fixit Clinic, n.d.). Once a date and time has been decided, the Fixit Clinic blog requests that all Fixit Clinics submit their event to the website to be listed in the Upcoming Events section, and promoted via the Fixit Clinic social media channels.

Finally, internal marketing will occur through SPL’s intranet home page and online forums, mass e-mails to all SPL employees, and announcements at the appropriate recurring meetings (including the Volunteer Coordinator meeting, the library’s technology-focused Tech Academy, and the Youth Services and Adult Services meetings).

Evaluation: Evaluation criteria will include:

- Program attendance
 - If we hold more than one, we can also evaluate program attendance over time.
- Patron satisfaction
 - Short, paper surveys will be available at the program, as well as at the information desk
 - Feedback from social media via comments or PMs will be taken into account
- Feedback from volunteer coaches (e.g. how they felt the program went, what could be done better, what types of objects were brought in most frequently, etc.)

As we’ve already seen in many of the articles listed above in the Evidence and Resources section, there are so many potential great stories to be told with repair programs. Not only are we adding value to our community by providing a free service for them to fix their broken objects, but we’re also giving people the opportunity to learn about how things are made and how they function, connect with others in their community they may never have connected with before, and contribute to a more sustainable earth.

As for expanding the program, we may begin with only fixing one type of object depending on the skills of the coaches the library can recruit. The more coaches we get, the more objects we can help patrons fix. After the initial pilot, the program can also be brought to other branches in the system that cater to different neighborhoods in Sacramento County.

References

Casey, M. [Michael Casey]. (2016, June 16). *Library as classroom – Civic engagement and participatory learning* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRSVEjgk1M>

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Stephens, M. (n.d.). *The hyperlinked library & emerging technologies: Focus on participatory services & transparency* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://sjsu-ischool.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=045fa418-fca1-4af1-81a6-1115e7533b39>

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5 Comments



Amanda Barden

October 22, 2017 at 7:35 pm [Edit](#)

Wow! I love everything about this – from the origin story of how you turned a negative into a positive with the teen who broke the Wii to using that as a launchpad for this cool program idea. One thing that I really love about the program idea is that it could achieve

many goals – not only do people who have broken items get them fixed, but people can teach and learn very valuable fix-it skills. This is awesome!



Ashton Vagnone

October 23, 2017 at 9:45 pm [Edit](#)

Amanda-

Thanks for your comment. It is a two-way, mutually beneficial street since some people really enjoy tinkering (like me!) and others just want a working product again.



Lisa Molson

October 22, 2017 at 11:53 pm [Edit](#)

What an amazing and original idea! My 13 year old son would be all over this (as I'm sure a lot of kids would). They love to tinker and build, and it wouldn't cost a lot. My friend's son will happily go to work fixing and assembling things, like Ikea products 😊



Ashton Vagnone

October 23, 2017 at 9:44 pm [Edit](#)

Lisa –

Thanks for the comment! I just finished building two Ikea chairs myself this morning and it is fun. Glad to hear that there's potential in this program. I'm sure if your son and your friend's son find this stuff interesting, there are other kids out there who will too.



Thu-Thao Tran

October 27, 2017 at 5:41 am [Edit](#)

This sounds like an awesome idea. Not only do customers have their items fixed, they also get to learn a new practical skill too! I like that you consider the resources already available to your library of choice for implementing the trial run.

Leave a comment

Logged in as [Michael Stephens](#). [Log out?](#)
