Heritage Makers

Chicago Public Library

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Heritage Makers

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$101-250

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Byline

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Heritage Makers is a series of makerspace workshops that highlight a "maker" from history. The workshops are planned in conjunction with heritage or awareness months for which our library already has celebrations and programming, such as Women's History Month, Disability Awareness Month and Native American Heritage Month.

Advanced Planning

The Chicago Public Library (CPL) Maker Lab was looking for ways to coordinate with the library's heritage/awareness month committees to combine a maker workshop with already-ongoing heritage or awareness month programming at the library. This proved to be a bit challenging, because the typical expectation of a maker lab class is to go home with a tangible object.

We eventually came up with our Heritage Makers program, a series of workshops highlighting makers (artisans) throughout history. Each workshop, held in our Maker Lab, features the creative work of a historical figure from the ethnic or other group being celebrated, then features a hands-on activity in which participants make an object (or something inspired by it) central to that artisan's culture or creative style.

I start planning these programs as far in advance as possible, but at least two months in advance of the specific heritage or awareness month it will celebrate. I research the artisan and work with our Maker Lab instructors to make sure the hands-on workshop is reasonable to complete in a two-hour session. It was a little difficult at first finding artisans appropriate for each heritage or awareness month, but you can get creative with it. (**View a list of 2018 Heritage Makers workshops under Attachments**). Some example workshops from our 2018 Heritage Makers programming schedule include:

- **African American History Month**: Benjamin Banneker's Clock — Participants designed a clock using the laser cutter.
- **Poetry Month:** William Blake's Printmaking — Participants used a milling machine to wood cut a block for printing.
- **Disability Awareness Month:** Louis Braille's Nameplate — Participants 3D-printed a nameplate with their name written in Braille.

Marketing

Heritage Makers is promoted as an adult class with our other heritage or awareness month programs. We work with our heritage/awareness committees to make sure the Maker Lab classes are listed in their calendar of events. Our marketing team writes and sends out a press release on the heritage or awareness month that highlights the different programs. Maker Lab classes are also highlighted in our monthly newsletter that goes out to all library card-holders each month.

We have found that this program is gaining a new audience for our Maker Lab. People who are already interested in a particular historical artisan can be immersed in a creative process that highlights that artisan.

Budgeting

The Heritage Makers class budget depends on the activity. Our Maker Lab classes are free to the public, but the required materials and staff are funded by our foundation.

For example, the acrylic we used to make Banneker clocks costs between $5 and $15 for a 12-by-24-inch piece, and you can make four clocks out of that piece. The clock mechanisms were purchased from Amazon for about $7 per piece. That was a more expensive class.

However, if you already have a makerspace the materials budget is very minimal. We typically use materials we already have in our Maker Lab to keep costs low.

Day-of-event Activity

It's important to set up the context your participants. I make sure to choose an artisan about whom I'm able to find a short documentary, usually via YouTube. You cannot expect all participants (or staff) to be familiar with the person or group you’re highlighting, so we take a few minutes at the beginning of the workshop to watch the video and understand the history behind the hands-on activity we're about to participate in.

We used to offer fliers with related books if participants were interested in learning more, but we phased those out. We found that the fliers weren't that helpful and were usually a waste of paper, since we could just refer interested patrons to related titles at the workshop. Finding materials was never a problem for these patrons, since the workshops are held at CPL's central branch. In the future, we will be able to link related material directly on our event page so patrons can be instantly connected to related titles.

Program Execution

Each highlighted artisan’s program is repeated throughout their respective heritage or awareness month, about five classes a month since February 2018. Our classes are limited to between four and twelve participants, depending on the technology used. William Blake's printmaking class was full, but registration was limited to four people due to the limitations of our milling machines. (**View a photo of a completed print under Photo Slideshow**.)

Many classes have had people who were unable to participate due to limited technology but were still able watch the class and follow along. The class has reached a new audience and highlighted makers in history and continues to be a big hit.

We are continuing this program for the foreseeable future. In addition to benefits for program participants, this program also gained buy-in from staff who have previously felt uninterested in the maker movement. By providing historical context and seeking help from colleagues who are experts on the specific historical figure being highlighted, they understood what role makers have had throughout history.

We handed out participant surveys after the classes, and a significant portion reported that it was their first time in the Maker Lab space, which had felt too intimidating for them in the past.

Advice

This is a great way to integrate your library's makerspace into already-planned heritage or awareness month programming.

I would recommend seeking out lesser known historical figures. I have found luck with artists who practice a traditional art.

I would also add that the mini-documentary at the beginning of class is important for providing context.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
heritage_makers_2018.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images





More Programs

Apr 28, 2015
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$$
Image



A Visit to Chicago Public Library's Maker Lab

Audiences:

Audience
Adults (21 and up)
Aug 6, 2015
Children (9 and under)+ |
Image



Red Hook Makes: From Borrowed Van to Mobile Maker Lab

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Mar 3, 2016
Children (9 and under)+ | □□
Image



Make Way for Makerspaces

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)