Book Review: The Makerspace Librarian's Sourcebook edited by Ellyssa Kroski

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With **The Makerspace Librarian's Sourcebook**, *editor* **Ellyssa Kroski** *offers a guide for librarians wanting to learn more about the different approaches to, challenges of and technologies involved in makerspaces. This is an interesting, informative and fun read, writes* **Antony Groves**, *that will inspire a wide audience.*

***The Makerspace Librarian's Sourcebook*. Ellyssa Kroski (ed.). Facet Publishing. 2017.**

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Makerspaces are essentially designated spaces where people come together to make things, and they continue to grow in popularity. Two of the key trends identified in the Library Edition of the 2017 NMC Horizon Report relate directly to makerspaces: 'Patrons as Creators' and 'Rethinking Library Spaces'. Whether you are a librarian wishing to explore this emerging area of work or an established maker looking for their next project, *The Makerspace Librarian's Sourcebook* should provide a useful starting point. Although an increasing number of resources can be found to support makerspaces and maker projects, there is still value in a textbook that helpfully brings together some of the different approaches, challenges and considerations in one place. This may be a 'Librarian's Sourcebook', but it is likely to be of interest to a wider audience and will appeal to those simply wanting to learn more about makerspaces.

The book is edited by Ellyssa Kroski, the Director of Information Technology at the New York Law Institute and editor of the *Library Technology Essentials* series. This has produced titles such as *Makerspaces in Libraries* and *Wearable Technology: Smart Watches to Google Glass in Libraries*. Kroski has successfully drawn upon her experience and knowledge in this area to create *The Maker Space Librarian's Sourcebook*. She is not alone in this: chapters are written by capable practitioners who have hands-on experience of delivering various maker projects (including Tom Bruno, author of the aforementioned *Wearable Technology*, who contributes a chapter on Google Cardboard).

At the beginning of Chapter One, Cherie Bronkar states that: 'From robotics to crocheting, there are no limits to your makerspace' (3). Although this is true and is a message that is repeated throughout the book, *The Maker Space Librarian's Sourcebook* focuses very much on the technological end of this spectrum. There are chapters on 3D printing, Raspberry Pi, Arduino, Wearable Electronics, Google Cardboard, Makey Makey, Robotics, Computer Numerical Control and more. If that all sounds a little daunting, the uninitiated reader can skip forward to the chapter on Lego to potentially find a more familiar entry point into the world of library makerspaces.

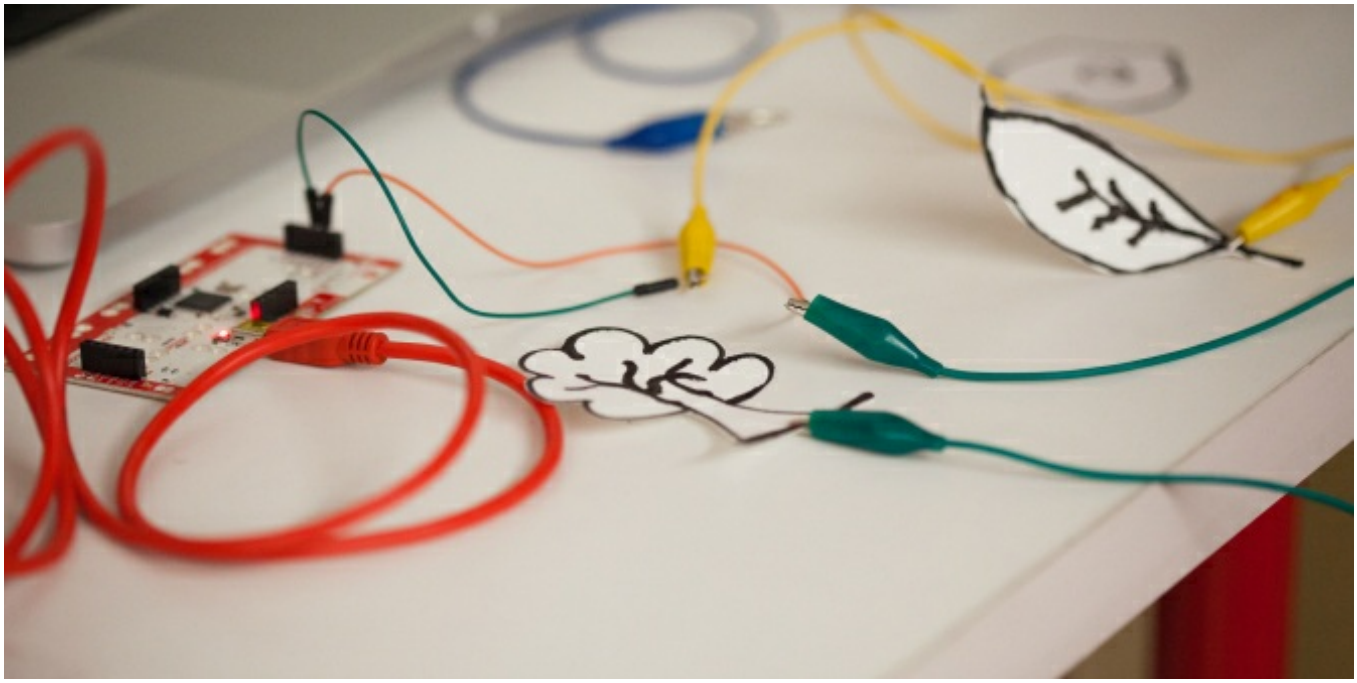

Image Credit: Makey Makey (Ultra-lab CC BY SA 2.0)

In addition to various pieces of hardware, the book discusses essential related software. For example, Stephen Tafoya's chapter about Raspberry Pi introduces the Sonic Pi program, which can be used to make music, along with a suggested project involving the hugely popular Minecraft computer game. The book includes many of the technologies most commonly associated with makerspaces, and the breadth of projects should offer something for all readers – whether those looking for a straightforward introduction to different models of 3D printer, practical guidance on how to write code for Arduino or precise instructions on how to create a Milled Wooden Phone Stand.

Many different aspects have been addressed covering the key considerations in setting up and running a library makerspace, including those of inclusivity and safety. The three parts of the book move logically from 'Creating the Library Makerspace' and 'Makerspace Materials, Tools and Technologies' to 'Looking Ahead', generally getting more advanced as the book progresses. The case studies that form Part Two make up over half of the book and provide practical ideas for librarians looking for makerspace projects. These chapters do not have to be read in order and readers can dip in and out of potential projects that interest them.

Chapters are enthusiastically written and include maker projects ranging from LED Fabric Bookmarks to Drone assembly. If you're unconvinced of the value of these exercises, the chapter considering the pedagogical value of makerspaces should allay any fears and equip you with an argument to get buy-in from colleagues. The final chapter from Eric Johnson addresses 'The Future of Library Makerspaces' and provides further insightful commentary on emerging technologies and potential challenges. His honest appraisal is that 'the near-term future is bright for library makerspaces, not least because they tend not to have the same requirement for self-sustaining profitability that private makerspaces do' (350).

Understandably, many of the questions that are asked when makerspaces are discussed relate to money. The book does not avoid this issue and will help you to answer such questions by providing approximate costing for many of the tools and projects. A selection of possible makerspace starter kits are included with equipment lists ranging from an estimated $500 for a 'Low Budget, Elementary School-Focused Makerspace Starter Kit' (16) to $50,000 for a 'Dream Budget – Milling/Power Equipment Focused Makerspace Equipment List' (17). There is also a page with advice on how to get started without funding, suggesting cost-efficient paper-based craft projects, donations or even encouraging participants to bring their own supplies. Whatever your library's budget, there is a makerspace to suit.

Although there are examples from a variety of library makerspaces (school, academic, mobile, pop-up), all are drawn exclusively from the USA with equipment prices appearing in dollars. Several chapters also include links to further resources and related case studies, but again these are predominantly North American. This is not necessarily detrimental to the book as the maker movement is a global one and prices can quickly be converted (and will inevitably change after publication, whether in dollars or pounds). However, including some of the initiatives happening in libraries around the world would have helped to reflect this broader community.

There may be omissions, but there are not gaps, and examples have been selected to highlight the range of approaches that is being taken to library makerspaces rather than to provide a comprehensive anthology of them all. In addition to selecting examples of current practice and looking ahead to what may be in store for makerspaces, the reader will learn some of the important dates in the history of the maker movement: the year that 3D printing was patented (1986, for those wondering), the year that the Lego Group was founded and the year that Nikola Tesla demonstrated the first radio-controlled boat. *The Maker Space Librarian's Sourcebook* is interesting, informative and fun – a worthy addition to the Facet catalogue. Ellyssa Kroski introduces the text as a 'one-stop handbook [that] will inspire readers' and it is successful in achieving this, although for those who are inspired it is more likely to act as a first-stop.

Antony Groves is a Learning & Teaching Librarian at the University of Sussex. He has helped to organise temporary makerspaces at the University of Sussex Library and written about these for the LSE Impact Blog and Information Today Europe. He has also participated in the International Maker Education Network and will be talking about different academic makerspaces at i2c2 2017.

Note: This review gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Review of Books blog, or of the London School of Economics.