

2024 IMLS LB21 Proposal - Library Makers: Growing a Community for Lifelong Learners and Leaders

Introduction

Our proposed project, *Library Makers: Growing A Community for Lifelong Learners and Leaders*, is designed to support the strategic expansion of a national community of practitioners through the professional development of its leaders and members. Califa is requesting \$249,469.44 for a 2-year Implementation grant from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program to help achieve Goal 3, Objective 3.3 in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The *Library Makers* (LM) community was created to address the needs of library professionals across the country who are developing and delivering makerspaces in diverse settings and locations to have a virtual place to share resources and learnings about maker programming sustainability and responsiveness to the 21st-century informational and educational needs of their local communities. We're entering a new phase of growth for the LM community and wish to:

- (1) Listen and gather insights from the field to develop strategies to address Problems of Practice for libraries with makerspaces
- (2) Initiate a sustainable cycle of leadership designed to build future leaders through experience and professional growth
- (3) Improve website features and conduct outreach to expand access and exposure for traditionally underrepresented libraries and communities
- (4) Synthesize learnings before designing and delivering professional development series and publications addressing the Problems of Practice for library makerspaces

Project Justification

The current IMLS-funded initiative *The New Face of Library Makerspaces* (2021-2024) is built on the learnings from the *Makers in the Library* project (2018-2020), which was funded by a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant through the CA State Library. In Feb. 2021, project staff held focus groups to better understand the needs of library makerspaces as they began to emerge from the pandemic. Participants expressed a desire for support, guidelines, and resources to help them strengthen and expand access to their makerspaces. These conversations were the catalyst for creating a national, practitioner-led community, now known as *Library Makers* (LM), to support libraries recovering from the pandemic, promote DEAI practices for staff and the larger communities they serve, and build library professionals' capacity, knowledge, practice, and skill sets. Members of *Library Makers* consist of all individuals registered with the online community and who adhere to the LM Community Guidelines. This online community has no cost and provides library makerspace practitioners a centralized space to consult with others in the field, share their own experiences, get input and solutions to technical problems, and much more. LM has recruited Charter Member libraries, published a *Makers in the Library Toolkit*, and implemented an Ambassador program to help promote our work and recruit new members. We would like to use the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant to expand upon our foundation.

Why libraries? Why makerspaces?

To understand the work of makerspaces in libraries one must recognize the role of public libraries in our society. When they came into existence in the mid-1800s libraries were based on the premise that knowledge should be free and accessible to all. To this day, libraries remain one of the only institutions that continue to be free and strive to be openly accessible to anyone regardless of their race, religious beliefs, or physical and mental abilities. Initially, libraries were created as educational institutions where books and manuscripts were available to enhance the knowledge of patrons. By the 1970's technology had taken hold and public, school, and college libraries were regularly meeting the needs of patrons for computer use and technology training. By 2005 library patrons were asking public libraries to provide access to tools, training, and space to create, imagine, and learn (Clark, 2014). The idea of makerspaces in libraries was born.

The premise of free and unfettered access remains at the core of library service today. What has changed is the idea that libraries contain only written works for patron use. "In the 21st Century, libraries continue to change and evolve to match new trends involving the way patrons consume books and other media. More than ever the 21st Century library is the digital library. By 2017, 100% of US libraries offered internet access and 90% helped with internet skills" (ALA, 2017). Libraries are places of constant evolution and responsiveness to the needs of their users. With the expectation that all libraries (large and small) provide for the educational, cultural, and recreational needs of their service areas, libraries are expanding their original missions to include access to much more than books: computers, tech devices, garden tools, 3-D printers, digital projectors, sewing machines, wood burners, craft tools, and more are being added to library collections.

The makerspace movement, which started around 2005 (Mann, 2019), has energized librarians to create collaborative workspaces in their libraries that allow users to learn, explore, create, and share skills that use high-tech to no-tech tools. The outgrowth of cities in the United States to rural areas has caused small public libraries to function as hubs in their communities. “A library makerspace is intended to allow community members to experience technology or activities that they previously were not able to access” (Mann, 2019). As far back as 1983, school art programs have seen dramatic cuts in class offerings, instruction, and the elimination of entire arts departments, much of which continues today (Raber, 2017). Libraries have stepped into this void to provide access to the arts, sciences, career skill training, and more to supplement existing school programs. Libraries are providing outreach makerspaces in areas where access to a physical library may be restricted. By bringing the makerspace concept to schools, child and adult day care centers, senior centers, college classes, and beyond, libraries are expanding their services beyond the walls of a physical building and engaging audiences in self-directed learning and discovery. Makerspaces offer the perfect opportunity to enhance library programs by providing services to diverse populations who may not otherwise have experienced the library.

In addition to providing access to various equipment and tools, library makerspaces address the needs of digital literacy, or “the ability to succeed in encounters with the electronic infrastructures and tools that make possible the world of the twenty-first century” (Martin, 2005). Makerspaces help support the next generation in learning creativity, critical thinking, and cutting-edge workforce skills. Employment skills for the 21st Century are an important economic need for employers and employees. Library makerspaces can meet that need.

Professional Development (PD)

The library field recognizes the growing need for library makerspace professionals to connect and share resources, evidenced by the upcoming petition from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to start an American Library Association (ALA) Round Table focused on library makerspaces. However, there is also a need for more affordable and accessible professional learning opportunities and leadership development, especially for those working in more isolated settings (rural, small, and tribal libraries). It is important to note that with the dissolution of other maker-specific organizations like *MakerEd* and the downsizing of *Nation of Makers*, there are fewer free resources available. The study by Knox, et. al. revealed that “well-trained staff are key to a makerspace that provides value and impact for the community” (pg. 28). It also highlighted that maker staff must constantly be learning and adapting, pointing to a need for a dynamic professional development (PD) platform that is more participatory and sensitive to changing issues than one-off workshops, conference presentations, or college courses. As the makerspaces in libraries movement grows and evolves, so does the need for access to education, training, and other resources for library staff. PD currently provides the clearest avenue to improving knowledge, practice, and self-efficacy in practitioners because there are no universally accepted minimum training qualifications or credentials for librarian maker professionals. Furthermore, many library staff are paraprofessionals without advanced library degrees and receive only on-the-job training or short-term online PD (Moen, M. H., Mandel, L. H., & Karno, V., 2020, Figure 3).

Library staff need support to learn how to best engage with their community to co-create a makerspace that is sustainable, responsive, and expands access to new audiences (Moorefield-Lang, 2015). Frequently makerspace practitioners are isolated, often due to being the only library staff working in their field in their library system. One of our LM Ambassadors said “that for younger people [LM] will provide those opportunities to build up their experience especially if they're in a small library where there is not always a lot of room or opportunities to step up into different levels of administrative experience.” Access to authentic and collaborative training is vital to makerspace development and programming. LM is uniquely positioned and capable of providing support and learning opportunities for practitioners by engaging and empowering current leaders to share their knowledge and expertise. LM will fill this need by providing free access to professional learning opportunities driven by an individual’s needs and interests through live online events, informal conversations, and support on our free community engagement website. In our first 6 months of community activity, we have drawn library staff from 27 states across the U.S. to our live events. This has become one of the main ways we attract new members to engage in our LM community. As of February 2024, our membership has reached 600. To quote one of our members, “I'm so glad I joined this group. It's reactivating the passion that has been a little dormant due to burnout... Just scrolling through this group, seeing your passion & your willingness to share, has given me such a boost! I feel like all the questions I haven't had the time to research in the past 4 years, they're all here and answered!”

Next steps for Library Makers

As successful as LM has been to date, the needs of our community have grown exponentially as evidenced by discussions

in our blogs and chat feeds. Members are asking questions about topics such as storing 3D printer filament, engaging all ages in lifelong learning opportunities, handling space limitations for makers while expanding makerspace programming, and finding grant funding for makerspaces. We need a place to answer those questions and expand opportunities for the LM community to collaborate on projects and ideas and support one another. For LM to be the platform library practitioners go to for all things makerspace, LM must remain relevant by addressing current trends, offering LM leadership training opportunities for members, and bringing exciting ideas and program possibilities to the LM community. LM must continue to “take the pulse” of its members to provide timely information and training.

There are ongoing needs we wish to address, such as activities and resources to keep current members engaged and to attract new members, particularly those from small, rural, and tribal libraries, from across the nation. A number of Ambassadors commented that it was often difficult to attract more than a handful of members for online activities and events, and suggested more expansive marketing, promotion, and methods for ascertaining timely topics of interest for members. We need to determine the current problems of practice in comparison to those identified in previous projects, expand access and exposure of underrepresented libraries, develop and establish a sustainable infrastructure of the LM community and its leadership team, and deliver PD addressing the problems of practice. We will create and share PD opportunities with our target group of 600+ members as well as countless other library maker staff. They will in turn share their knowledge and expertise with library staff and patrons in the communities they serve, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this project.

Project Work Plan

Introduction to Library Makers

Library Makers (LM) builds upon the achievements and collaborations of two previous library makerspace community-building projects. The first project was *Makers in the Library*, an LSTA-funded project via the California State Library in which ten under-resourced public libraries across California worked over nearly three years to develop, build, and launch their own uniquely community-centered makerspace programs. Most of these libraries had very limited space and staff, yet were able to creatively offer engaging hands-on makerspace programs for patrons of all ages via unique modes of delivery at a modest expense. The programs, which were implemented in rural, urban, and suburban California communities, encompassed creative and cultural arts, local industry, digital design, and STEM.

Through this project, we defined several diverse models for the implementation of makerspaces in the library, breaking free from the stereotypical idea that makerspaces are high-tech dedicated spaces housing only expensive and complex digital fabrication tools. Instead, library makerspaces often included a mix of high- and low-tech tools and materials stored modularly, sometimes housed in bins or on a cart that could be rolled in and out of a multipurpose space, or transported between branches to help even the most rural libraries access materials. The resulting programs demonstrated the desire and possibility of establishing robust makerspaces in places that might otherwise never have had them. To support establishing alternative makerspace models in a wide variety of settings, we published the *Makers in the Library Toolkit*, which outlined the process for designing, building, evaluating, and sustaining a makerspace with and for the community. The publication includes 21 adaptable tools staff can use to design and grow their makerspace program. The Toolkit has been widely disseminated and used in academic library science programs, including the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Indiana University-Indianapolis, and San Jose State University.

After that project ended, our team and many of our California library partners wanted to extend our reach beyond the state to help more libraries across the country use the Toolkit. We set out to find and connect people who work in library makerspaces to form a professional learning collective: the *Library Makers* community. With *The New Face of Library Makerspaces*, a post-pandemic project funded by IMLS, we extended our reach to a national audience, starting with a focus on how the pandemic changed makerspaces in libraries.

In Dec. 2021 we recruited seven geographically dispersed Charter Member libraries from around the country, selected via an application process. These libraries became the founding institutional members of our network and provided initial leadership. Each had established makerspaces that continued to offer innovative services even during the pandemic. With our commitment to serving diverse audiences, half of the Charter Members were in rural areas. To ensure our online community would have the foundational framework to grow and be sustained, the Charter Members worked for a year to establish the norms of working together as a distributed leadership group, identify the values and goals for professional learners, and define the key challenges, or Problems of Practice, that library makerspace staff face.

After the first year, we recruited a team of 14 LM Ambassadors, who were selected due to their experience with making and their ability to network with other library professionals in their region. The Ambassadors were individual library staff members who represented geographically and socio-economically diverse places. Ambassadors are active members of the LM community, creating content to address needs and deepen connections with current members, increasing membership, staying abreast of the interests of the LM community, and providing project staff and Charter Members feedback on the systems set up for the members of the LM community. The rapid growth of the LM community is a strong testament to the need for its expansion. At the time this proposal was submitted, there were 608 librarymakers.org community members, 1600 Library Makers Facebook group members, and a newsletter mailing list of 725 individuals.

Together, the Charter Members and Ambassadors have helped grow our following, stayed connected with our LM community members via our online platform, and delivered free online member engagement programs every month. Charter Members and Ambassadors have benefited personally and professionally from LM participation. Members have cited examples of personal growth through their LM participation including leadership, planning, and presentation opportunities. One strong indication of the level of LM buy-in and commitment to the community is the fact that this grant submission is being led by three members of the LM Ambassador cohort, for some the first time participating in a federal grant submission. In turn, LM provides a peer-to-peer vehicle for sharing their collective knowledge and experience with the broader membership through blogs, webinars, and online forums, all freely accessible to anyone via our website. But the program pilot revealed difficulties, too. The work has been challenging, and some of our Charter Members became burned out, less active, or left their library and weren't replaced. To keep things moving forward, we asked some of our Ambassadors to fill roles that Charter Members had been serving on our Leadership Team committees, which reduced their ability to focus on outreach with members. Some Ambassadors noted difficulty keeping the LM community online chat board conversation active and ongoing. Others expressed some initial unfamiliarity and uncertainty about how to participate with other professionals in an online community setting. Despite the ubiquity and proliferation of digital tools, not everyone has equal experience and comfort communicating in online spaces. We will address these challenges as we continue to build and refine the leadership and committee structure and build a sustainable cycle of leadership that prevents burnout and provides more time for serving member needs through developing and producing learning programs.

Member Engagement Programs

Each month, LM offers free programs for members, including a one-hour learning opportunity delivered via Zoom featuring a topic of interest and presented by a library practitioner (sometimes one of our own Ambassadors, or someone invited from within our professional networks or online community). Topics include a *Tool Talk* series, where members share tips about using a certain piece of equipment; a *STEAM Seekers* series, where library staff help their peers gain confidence supporting STEAM programming; and other special events featuring coding, grant writing, and more. In addition, each month LM offers an informal drop-in “come as you are” no-agenda gathering called *Happy Hour*, where people can simply get to know one another and talk for an hour. A social function like this provides LM community members with a welcoming, non-judgmental, and comfortable setting to network and build trust. While attendees appreciate the informal gatherings, attendance is limited due to the challenges of various national time zones. In addition, the current topics for monthly learning opportunities are determined *in response* to those stepping up with ideas to offer instead of *proactively* recruiting leaders to share their expertise on a topic that is relevant to the needs of practitioners.

Project Design

Goal 1: Listen and gather insights from the field to develop strategies to address Problems of Practice for libraries with makerspaces

In the previous IMLS grant, Charter Members identified common Problems of Practice in library makerspaces. These problems seem universal, no matter the size of the library.

Problems of Practice include:

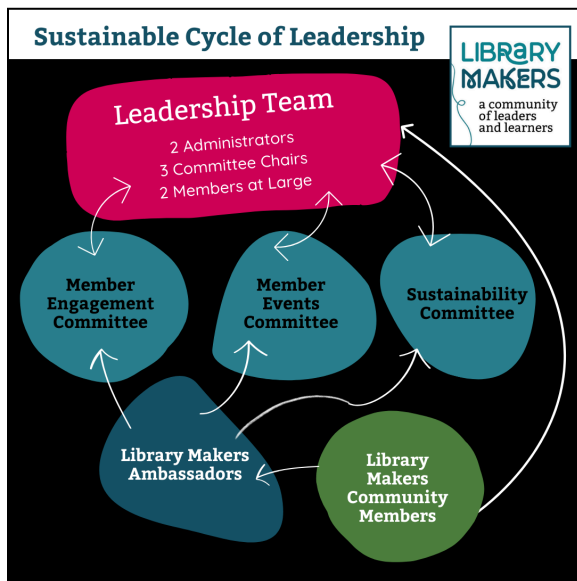
- Marketing and attracting new audiences to effectively engage all community demographics, assess community needs, and develop meaningful targeted marketing strategies.
- Making the case for library makerspaces to effectively measure and convey their impact.
- Overcoming cultural and socio-economic barriers by creating accessible and welcoming makerspaces, regardless of cultural, socio-economic, developmental, or physical barriers.
- Sustainability of resources to maintain the equipment and staffing necessary to remain relevant to the community.

- Operational challenges in developing policies and procedures for non-traditional spaces and to recruit, hire, and retain well-trained staff.
- Staff training and building librarian self-efficacy to support routine and frequent training and reflection, especially related to STEM content and program facilitation.

While we have identified these problems, we have not developed solutions or identified libraries that have exhibited promising strategies to face them. This will be the focus of our forthcoming PD offerings. Through our first year, we have learned how to deliver webinar-style programs and promote them to garner the interest and attendance of staff from libraries around the country. However, we have not been able to develop a cohesive program of PD offerings that respond to community needs. We have offered a true mix of programs, highly dependent on the presenters' schedules and interests, and have not designed them with the Problems of Practice in mind. Our goal for this grant is to collaborate with LM members to develop and deliver a series of PD experiences that truly address these problems with intention and focus on practical application in the library.

We will seek answers from within our existing community of libraries and outside the membership, targeting outreach efforts toward building an accurate understanding of the needs and issues of a fluid and diverse library maker audience. We will listen to input from staff working in rural, urban, suburban, and tribal libraries. To accomplish this, we will first administer surveys to LM members and practitioners at large using avenues such as listservs from ALA, ARSL, and other partners and advisors. Using survey findings as a baseline, we will probe deeper into a variety of topics and themes by holding a series of roundtable sessions with current LM members and non-members. The survey and roundtable topics will focus on vetting the Problems of Practice and could also include topics such as: the compatibility of previously established community norms and practices with those of potential new members, leadership trajectories, and opportunities for external partnerships and collaborations. This will help shape the direction of our LM community and provide creative and resourceful solutions that can be shared more broadly.

Goal 2: Initiate a sustainable cycle of leadership designed to build future leaders through experience and professional growth



The founding Charter Members and inaugural cohort of Ambassadors is reaching the end of their term. Through their service, we have laid a strong foundation and piloted the various roles and systems necessary to foster participation and leadership. The task of building this community from the ground up has now shifted to creating the necessary ongoing systems to manage stability and growth. We have discovered areas that need to evolve to streamline collaborative work, fine-tune roles, and clarify responsibilities. Many Ambassadors have shifted from an outreach role to a program support or administrative role for LM. Since both outreach and program administration are essential in our online community (and essential skills for developing programs in their own libraries), we will recruit our Leadership Team and the next two Ambassador cohorts with specific roles in mind to ensure these categories are sufficiently covered by the participants. The Leadership Team will help steer the big-picture goals and administration and will include the 2 Administrators (Project Director, Community Manager), the Chair of each of our 3 committees (Member Engagement, Member Events, Sustainability), and 3 members at large (general LM Community members). Each

committee will have 5 members, in addition to the Chair. General committee members will complete tasks in alignment with their committee's goals and focus areas, as directed by the Chair. These tasks may include welcoming new members (Member Engagement), facilitating online events (Member Events), and connecting with potential partners (Sustainability). Committee Chairs will report monthly progress at standing Leadership Team meetings.

To ensure a continuous, representative, and inclusionary cycle of leadership, the next two Ambassador cohorts will have an overlapping term of service. Over their 18-month terms, Ambassadors will conduct outreach in their region and focus on what is happening in libraries and professional practice. With this grant, we will select a total of 12-16 people each

year who are passionate about making in libraries, work across a variety of library types (including small, rural, and tribal libraries), and can contribute an average of ten hours a month as either:

- **Community Connectors** who are good communicators and people connectors
- **Practitioner Specialists** who are great with sharing and teaching online and in-person

As our Ambassador cohort reaches the halfway point of their term, any Ambassadors with potential and interest will transition to a Leadership Team role.

By recruiting (through our advisors, partners, social media, blog, newsletter, and outreach at conferences and events) and selecting Ambassadors from previously underrepresented regions, we will continually expand to connect with new and diverse audiences with each new cohort. In return, Ambassadors will receive additional professional growth opportunities to help them feel confident to present at regional or national conferences on behalf of LM and gain insights into equitable community management strategies, with the hopes that some would transition to our Leadership Team in future years.

Goal 3: Improve website features and conduct outreach to expand access and exposure for traditionally underrepresented libraries and communities

While our first grant saw strong growth in membership and the establishment of our interactive website, activity on the site has diminished over time as the initial excitement wears off for members. In addition to monitoring general membership growth, we will study a variety of analytics to help assess the health of our LM community through the Mighty Networks platform on which librarymakers.org is hosted. We will explore the features and functions of the site to facilitate and encourage more member-to-member interaction and train our Ambassadors in the website's unique functionality. In addition to our current efforts encouraging members to complete their online profiles and participate in the newsfeed for exchanging just-in-time support with peers, we will also incorporate new features as they become available in the Mighty Networks application to better facilitate connections between members with common interests and needs. Website analytics will help us track overall engagement rates and levels of individual activity to follow the development of new leaders and the number of conversations that address our newly refined problems of practice. To help facilitate this, we will identify 1-2 LM community members to serve as Mighty Networks experts. We will invest in their time over the two years of this project to ensure they receive the appropriate training to help us troubleshoot the website and streamline our analytics to help regularly inform our next steps.

As the LM community grows it is imperative to ensure that members see value in participation and continue to feel valued. We will strengthen community practices and norms to ensure activities, services, and resources are reflective of and support the current needs and issues of the LM community. To grow and meet the needs of a diverse library maker community we recognize that LM cannot be perceived primarily as an outcome of our own efforts, but rather as part of a larger library maker ecosystem in which our efforts can take root, bloom, and propagate. In many cases, online communities are established through insular, highly structured, top-down activities. Missing are the informal back channels of communication, information sharing, and trust-building central to cooperation and the spread of innovation within communities of practice (Riverin, S., & Stacey, E., 2008).

In this vein, we will implement several methods to deepen our communications with members and assess how the LM community can be strengthened, expanded, and sustained. Throughout both years 1 and 2, as Ambassadors interact with other members, they will keep a journal of their interactions, logging key resources and innovations that can be shared with the LM community on our website and via personal interactions with members. We will seek solutions and resources to address the challenges facing our LM community at large and determine if these findings fall into the categories of our Problems of Practice. Additionally, targeted LM community discussions and connections will help librarians appreciate and understand how their work fits into the broader library ecosystem. In this way, members will be exposed to different perspectives and models of how makerspaces are managed and positioned within a library or community, reflected by the diversity of the LM community. We will learn from the interactions of our Ambassadors in the field as they seek out unique approaches from a variety of library types, which will serve as a helpful resource as they engage in casual interaction on the website and more extensive 1:1 dialogue, both online and in person.

The growth of this online community to traditionally underrepresented libraries will be promoted through our membership, leadership committees, and Ambassadors, partners, and advisors. In addition, we will reach out via round table discussions, conference or poster sessions, and booths at regional and national professional organizations such as the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries

(ARSL). Ambassadors help maximize our reach because they are part of state and regional library groups and organizations around the country and can share information about LM programs and events across those organizations and invite people to participate. This has been a successful outreach strategy with our inaugural group of Ambassadors which, in under one year, has helped our website's membership grow from zero to over 600.

Goal 4: Synthesize learnings before designing and delivering professional development series and publications addressing the Problems of Practice for library makerspaces

Midway through the project, as we work to validate and address the key Problems of Practice, we will host the first in-person meeting of our Leadership Team in conjunction with the 2025 Play Make Learn (PML) Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Our partners at UW-Madison have agreed to provide their space logistical support, and coordination. The 2025 convening for LM leaders will offer both in-person and hybrid elements for those who are unable to travel to attend. LM members have presented at this conference twice in recent years and were invited to hold a pre-conference workshop at the 2024 PML Conference in July. UW-Madison's makerspace research is well established through this annual conference and the maker educator certification program they offer underscores the lifelong learning benefits of maker education programs in formal and informal learning environments, including libraries.

Goals for the *Library Makers* Leadership Team convening will be that LM leaders:

1. share a common understanding and broaden perspectives about Problems of Practice
2. determine the best ways to provide PD and cultivate an inclusive and supportive professional learning community
3. further efforts on a sustainability plan and continued cycle of leadership for LM

With data in hand, the Leadership Team will work with our Committee members and Ambassadors to develop additional new content (e.g., a webinar series on a topic), features (e.g., a dedicated area of the website where members can tackle sensitive issues), services (e.g. formal mentorship programs), and outreach efforts (e.g., local events) to engage more library audiences in a professional learning community of their peers. We will create a collection of brief LM Practitioner Guides that offer practical solutions to the stated Problems of Practice. These guides will be 2-page illustrated PDFs with tips, links to resources, and examples that can serve as prompts for further discussion in our online community.

Evaluation Plan

Scott Burg of Rockman et al. will assess the effectiveness of the LM structure and activities through three primary domains: 1) **Expansion**, 2) **Health**, and 3) **Results**. Mixed evaluation methods will focus on the LM community's activities and processes. Evaluation is key in contributing to shared learning, and we will conduct all project evaluation activities in coordination with the LM Leadership Team. This participatory approach will build the LM community's capacity to conduct ongoing evaluation of the project and support evaluation activities at the local level for LM members.

Year 1 evaluation activities will focus on the expansion of the LM community and elements critical to the ongoing scaling up and sustainability of its purpose, function, management, and evolution of organizational roles and responsibilities. Evaluators will assess the development of tools and resources and the use of various communication platforms for marketing and dissemination. Evaluation questions for *Library Makers* community **expansion** include: Who should participate in LM? Should original goals and objectives be redefined? How can LM continue to provide value to its members and the library maker field at large? How will LM's model continue to uphold DEAI principles among member libraries, member recruitment, and determining priority functions and activities? What types of outreach and resources (including aspects of the *Makers in the Library Toolkit*) are most critical for meeting the needs of diverse libraries and their patrons? In what maker-related knowledge and skill areas do librarians feel the most and least confident (self-efficacy)?

Specific Year 1 evaluation activities will include:

- Surveys and listening sessions with LM Leadership, Committee Members, Ambassadors, members, and partners
- Surveys and listening sessions with *potential* LM community members and partner organizations
- Observation and documentation of LM meetings and communications
- An article documenting key findings to be published in *Medium* and distributed through LM

Year 2 evaluation activities will pivot to an examination of the LM community's **Health** and **Results**. Both are critical to the LM community's long-term scaling up, sustainability, and relevance, as they reflect LM members' enthusiasm and commitment and ensure their ability to work together to achieve shared goals. Evaluation questions related to community

Health include: How does LM continue to support communication and collaboration among members? What incentives are necessary to keep LM members engaged and responsive? How does LM continue to support the participation of underserved and underrepresented libraries and communities? Assessment of the LM community's results (e.g., impact on members, impact on the field, focus on virtual vs. onsite maker activities) will be conducted in collaboration with member libraries and their communities. Evaluation questions related to the LM community's **Results** include: To what extent do diverse stakeholder groups (libraries, patrons, community organizations) sustain their involvement and commitment to the goals of the LM community? Is LM able to build on its successes and failures? Is LM making progress on interim outcomes that signal progress to longer-term goals? How have LM community outreach efforts improved access and equity to maker activities? To what degree have LM's PD activities addressed librarian self-efficacy concerns related to makerspace design and implementation?

Specific Year 2 evaluation activities will include:

- Survey and interviews with members to understand their expectations and concerns
- Observation/attendance at meetings to document and assess core processes such as communication, consensus building, member recruitment, and strategic planning
- Analysis of online communications and other digital analytics to assess member participation and engagement
- An article documenting key findings to be published in *Medium* and distributed through LM

Dissemination

Data collected from ongoing assessment and evaluation measures including annual surveys of LM community members and interviews with Leadership Team members, as well as key analytics from the Mighty Networks platform, can be used to create strategic content and outreach plans that inform others working in makerspaces or library staff training at large. In addition, we will apply key takeaways from listening sessions to create shareable resources to build the capacity of our current and future *Library Makers* leaders and others who run professional learning communities. We will create and publish the LM Practitioner Guides mentioned above, which will be posted for free on our website and shared at a variety of local and national conferences as well as on our monthly blog, bi-monthly email newsletter, and active Facebook newsfeed. Through our sustainable Ambassador plan, we will continue to build a broad coalition of support while reducing the risk of burnout as we build the LM name, reputation, leadership team, and infrastructure. Another result of this project is strengthened networking within the profession. LM is just beginning to see the impact of professional networking, where members are learning from each other about best practices for maker program facilitation, recommendations for materials and equipment, policies, patron privacy, and much more. Connecting with partners like our advisors, the potential ALA Round Table, national, state, and local library associations and conferences, and the PML Conference will help us disseminate our findings to audiences far beyond our current membership.

Project team & collaborators: Paula MacKinnon, executive director of the Califa Group, will serve as authorizing agent for the project. She will manage project finances, contractors, and assist with recruitment and distribution of stipends. Lisa Regalla, CEO of Regallium Consulting, LLC, and former Project Director for the Makers in the Library project and IMLS-funded *The New Face of Library Makerspaces*, will serve as Project Director of this initiative. She will oversee the creation and execution of the Leadership Team and three committees, give input into the evaluation process, and ensure all aspects of the project are completed on time. Pamela Van Halsema, head of P. Van Halsema Consulting, will serve as the Community Manager and will provide guidance to maintain a healthy, growing, and engaged online community while also providing input on processes that guide the LM Ambassador Program. Scott Burg, Senior Research Principal at Rockman, et.al., will serve as the project evaluator and will conduct a formative and summative process evaluation to assess the utility and broader impact of the project and provide best practices for replicable development models for adaptation by other libraries. Additionally, members of the LM Leadership Team, including Committee Chairs and members at large will support the implementation of the growth initiatives outlined in this project proposal.

Advisory Board: The project team has put together a group of advisors who have all committed via email to share their expertise with our project. They were chosen due to their dedication to supporting library makerspaces, success in outreach to our target audiences (small, rural, and tribal libraries), and/or expertise in supporting communities of practice. They have agreed to participate by attending 3 online meetings throughout the project and disseminating any findings or opportunities. By tapping into the individual expertise of each of these individuals, they will contribute by providing: (1) Outreach support for our round table discussions to expand our audience to underserved library groups working in rural and tribal libraries; (2) Guidance on selecting future rounds of Ambassadors; (3) Help to synthesize data gathered around our Problems of Practice; and (4) Advice on our evolving leadership structure.

Our advisors include the following individuals:

- Kyungwon Koh, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Director of the Champaign-Urbana Community Fab Lab
- Vera Michalchik, PhD, Director of Philanthropy Research and Education, Stanford University
- Rafi Santo, PhD, Principal Researcher, Telos Learning
- Soo Hyeon Kim, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Indiana University-Indianapolis
- Ada Ren-Mitchell, Learning Programs Designer, Public Library Innovation Exchange (PLIX), MIT Media Lab
- Allison Waukau, President of the American Indian Library Association, Member of the ATALM Tribal Library Council Leadership Team

Diversity Plan

Library Makers has committed to including diverse practitioners and library types from our earliest days. In our first CA State Library LSTA-funded project, *Makers in the Library* (2018-2020), we expanded the traditional perception of makerspaces by helping under-resourced public libraries launch community-centered makerspace programs. Not limited to the sleek, fabrication labs many are accustomed to, these spaces incorporated cultural arts, STEM, and mobile and modular tools to aid in making. In the next phase of recruiting Charter Libraries, *The New Face of Library Makerspaces* (2021-2024), we included a diverse audience by ensuring half of the Charter Members were libraries in rural areas. In our second phase of Ambassadors, we focused on recruiting from small and rural libraries and added two community college libraries to the cohort. We also provided two PD sessions with the HOPE Speaks Project for our Charter Members and Ambassadors to hold honest, open, personal, and engaged (HOPE) conversations about race and racism.

By including diverse perspectives in our charter group of libraries and Ambassadors, we were able to ensure these voices are involved in defining the needs, problems, and challenges of creating and implementing the project as we progress. These practitioners have been involved in listening sessions and have played a vital role in our Ambassador program and in hosting PD sessions. In 2022, we participated and presented at the virtual Technology Services in Tribal Libraries meeting and the in-person ATALM conference. We are excited to continue our relationship with Allison Waukau, who is an advisor and President of the American Indian Library Association, and Ada Ren-Mitchell, who leads PLIX's initiatives with tribal libraries. We have more work to do to build relationships, gain trust, and form cooperative exchanges of information and support with tribal libraries and we will continue to reach out for future involvement and inclusion.

In the next phase of our project, we are committed to expanding our diversity efforts by targeting practitioners in rural, small, and tribal libraries. In Year 1, we will recruit a minimum of four librarians from rural or small libraries to become Ambassadors. In Year 2, we will recruit a minimum of two librarians from tribal libraries for the next cohort of Ambassadors. We hope that by the end of Year 2, at least one representative from each of these traditionally underrepresented groups will serve on our Committees and/or Leadership Team. We will recruit Ambassadors from within our LM community as well as through outreach to professional library organizations like ALA and Public Library Association and also those aimed at underrepresented groups, such as ATALM and ARSL. Our Sustainability Committee will ensure that funding for conference attendance goes to LM members who may not otherwise be able to attend, thus increasing representation and conference participation opportunities for underrepresented groups.

We will amplify diverse voices internally and invite partners who emphasize DEAI. Because our PD and networking opportunities are virtual and freely accessible, we can reach people in traditionally underserved areas who may not have the means to attend in-person or paid sessions. We can reach practitioners who are disabled or who are uncomfortable meeting in large groups due to health or mobility concerns. While women are a minority in STEM fields, they are a majority in the library field. We will empower women in the STEM field of makerspaces and inspire others to follow.

We have intentional goals of reaching diverse practitioners in traditionally underserved communities, in a wider variety of library types, and in geographically and economically diverse libraries. By creating a centralized virtual space for belonging, community, collaboration, learning, and leading, we will help practitioners feel less isolated and better supported, leading to longevity and diversity in the makerspace workforce.

Project Results

We will deliver practical benefits that impact different levels with our work:



LM Ambassadors: The members of our current Ambassador group have cited examples of personal and professional growth through leadership, planning, and presentation opportunities. We will help these established and emergent leaders as they prepare grant applications, write conference presentation proposals, and draft resources and materials for our LM community and the library field. LM discussions and connections help librarians appreciate and understand how their work fits into the broader library ecosystem.

LM Community Members: Creating a safe, trusted, and dedicated online space for library staff to interact about the professional topics relevant to the specialized work of library makerspaces will help professionalize the entire field. It is not otherwise easy to find peers who can relate and provide the specific help and advice needed, especially in more rural areas. Our members report that when they went to library school, there were no classes about library makerspaces. While that is changing, there is still a gap for those currently working in makerspaces, and even those just out of library school, as

makerspaces continually evolve with rapidly changing technologies.

Libraries and systems where LM community members work: Libraries that are trying to launch or sustain makerspaces can instantly benefit from the collective knowledge of the varied expertise of the LM community members. LM provides free and accessible answers and resources to address issues or prevent problems in the makerspace. Staff training, confidence, and job satisfaction could all be bolstered and potentially lead to less staff time spent in frustration trying to fix problems that arise. Inspiration and ideas for creative programming seen within the group’s shared content help enrich library program offerings. Survey responses include comments like, “The session was very informative and directly applicable to what we’re trying to accomplish at my library,” and “The detailed hands-on information makes me think I can do it.”

The Field: the library profession at large: The LM community supports and inspires practitioners and shares relevant resources that demonstrate the value of makerspaces for patrons and stakeholders. We strive to establish the library makerspace as a core resource for building lifelong learning, digital literacies, individual growth, creative expression, and economic opportunities through skills development and access to tools. We will have a national impact through LM membership and, more broadly, through our online presence and resources publicly available to all, particularly because there isn’t another collective professional resource in existence. As an increasing number of libraries develop makerspaces, the need for videos, blog articles, and published guides on our platform will increase. These resources will be available to anyone for free via our website with the added benefit of providing a space for connection and dialogue. LM will maintain an online presence beyond the scope of the proposed project timeline.

A collaborative leadership model

In addition to direct, practical assistance to library staff that can help them be better equipped for their day-to-day jobs, this project aims to deliver a model for sustaining and growing a practitioner-led community for library professionals built on a collaborative and inclusionary process of distributed leadership, decision making, and communication that fosters trust, accountability, and shared learning. We believe that if leadership and responsibility are equitable and meaningful, the knowledge and experience that result are likely to lead to individual and collective learning opportunities, as well as increased motivation. Promoting equal access to opportunities for leadership is consistent with and contributes to the community’s norms, beliefs, and principles from which our members develop a shared purpose. Library makerspace practitioners will take the information back to their home libraries and use it to impact their relationships and interactions with makerspace patrons. As these patrons discover critical thinking, creative, and marketable skills, they will develop an attitude of lifelong experiential learning and confidence that will benefit their self-esteem, education, careers, and interpersonal relationships long after they leave the makerspace.

2024 IMLS LB21 Proposal - Library Makers: Growing a Community for Lifelong Learners and Leaders

Digital Products Plan

Type

Digital products for this project will include website content, webinars via Zoom and recordings of those webinars (.MP4 files uploaded to YouTube), blog articles, files on Google Drive, and PDF publications.

Availability

Our digital products will be freely and publicly available on our dedicated website www.librarymakers.org, and videos will be posted both there and on our Library Makers Community YouTube Channel www.youtube.com/@librarymakerscommunity.

To increase our reach with these materials, we will share them via our Library Makers Facebook Group, send to subscribers of our bi-monthly email newsletter, and distribute through other professional online discussion boards, roundtables and presentations, and professional library conferences, like Play Make Learn at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums, and Association of Rural and Small Libraries.

Library Makers has a dedicated email address and file storage through Google. Members of the Leadership Team and Committee Members have access to these shared folders. There is a process in place to remove anyone from these shared files within one month of them rotating off. In addition, there is a limited access folder that contains financial information as well as documents with personal information that is only accessible to the Project Director and Community Manager. There is a policy in place to change the passwords for the email account and all associated Library Makers accounts (e.g. Zoom, Canva, YouTube) every 6 months.

The project may include other additional digital products including professional development videos and resources specific to the training of Library Makers Ambassadors, which will only be available to the Ambassadors and Leadership Team members rather than the general public.

Access

All work will be attributed to the Library Makers content creators and our partners and featured guest presenters. Attribution will be given to IMLS for their support. The PDF publications will be produced conforming with current ADA accessibility standards, and will not be copyrighted, but will be assigned a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial, Share Alike, 4.0 International license non-restrictive Creative Commons license, and will be made available to all on our website with no restrictions to access and download.

The Califa Group and Regallium Consulting, LLC, do not assert copyright. There will be no restrictions to access, and one condition of use for these digital publications is that anyone who shares the digital products attributes the product creators and IMLS. This condition will be clearly stated on the webpage where these are posted.

Any recordings, video, or photographs gathered from participating libraries that might be used in our project and shared or incorporated into our training will be used with advance permission.

Library Makers hosts a moderated interactive forum for library makerspace staff in which participants agree to adhere to community guidelines which set expectations for civility, mutual respect, kindness, and integrity. Ambassadors receive training in diversity, equity, and inclusion and anti-racism approaches to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all participants even when engaged in difficult conversations (synchronous and asynchronous) in our digital spaces.

One of the foundational values of the Library Makers community is that everyone is welcome. The community is a place for everyone no matter their race and ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identification, socioeconomic status, age, or physical or mental ability. We treat members fairly and respectfully. People are valued based on distinctive skills, experience, and perspective. We recognize and embrace the uniqueness of each individual and their contributions.

2024 IMLS LB21 Proposal - Library Makers: Growing a Community for Lifelong Learners and Leaders

We also believe in the power of building an accessible community. We aim to make sure our meetings and events are accessible to all members. We come together as professionals regardless of position or titles in support of learning and each other. How we achieve this is a work in progress and will continue to adapt to the needs of its members as we grow as we hear more about their needs and the world around us changes.

On our website we plan to employ a strategic hashtag strategy to help make topical chat board threads more searchable by subject area. We will strive to optimize our digital assets for search discoverability. Digital multimedia content uploaded to YouTube and on the project website will be posted with relevant titles, keywords, tags, and metadata as much as possible to aid in their internal discoverability to those platforms and more widely accessible via search engines like Google or Bing. We will also include a transcript with our YouTube postings to make the videos more accessible.

Sustainability

The digital assets developed through this grant will be posted as a free resource on the Library Makers website. PDFs and videos will be kept online in a section that we will create to house these resources. If our website shifts to a different platform, or our organization evolves in such a way that requires us to move these resources, CALIFA will seek an alternative web host.