

# 5 Secrets of Successful Makerspaces

## 1 Get started with a small investment

“Start small ... start with what you know. Don’t overwhelm yourself,” advises Sharona Ginsberg, Learning Technologies Librarian at SUNY Oswego. Some libraries even have maker boxes—mini collections of tools and supplies without a set space. You can grow the maker activities in your library gradually as interest builds, which it most likely will. “It’s not just the new hot trend that going to go away,” says Sharona.

---

## 2 Include Makerspace planning in your collection development strategy

“Makerspaces are very much collection development,” says Emily Thompson, Studio Librarian at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC). Many departments have equipment—such as cameras—for the exclusive use of those within that department. The library can fill a need by expanding the collection to provide access to tools and equipment not previously available to other students and faculty.

---

## 3 Integrate Makerspace activities with the curricula

Makerspaces support the curricula by offering students the opportunity to apply the skills they’re learning to hands-on projects. “Reach out to faculty and suggest ways the material taught within their courses may have a connection to Makerspace projects,” suggests John Burke, Library Director and Principal Librarian at Miami University Middletown. “Solve a need for a particular department such 3-D printing for engineering designs,” he says.

---

## 4 Promote cross-disciplinary use

At the UTC Studio (their library Makerspace), Emily Thompson is seeing a lot of interest from departments that don’t typically seek library instruction, including art, interior design, business, political science, and English. She’s hosted many workshops for a wide variety of students and faculty. Unlike department-specific labs, library Makerspaces offer students extended hours and the opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration.

---

## 5 Get help from the maker community

“It’s part of the *gestalt* of the entire maker movement that it’s community-based, it’s collaborative. ... Do not attempt to do all of this on your own because you don’t need to,” says Mark Hatch, CEO of TechShop. The library staff doesn’t have to learn every aspect of 3-D printing, programming, or soldering. Partner with the maker community, both on- and off-campus, to get help and build skills.