

# PHASE II PROJECT REPORT

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PREPARED BY COMMON FUTURES LTD

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common**LIBRARIES**



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# INTRODUCTION

## Origins of the Initiative

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The Common Libraries initiative flows from the drivers of change in UK library services, moves to reconfigure libraries as spaces to facilitate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) skills development, together with wider developments in the digital landscape. It is coloured by the endeavours of the Open Source and Creative Commons movements, community-led libraries as well as our own enthusiasm for hacking and making.

In the course of launching the initiative in Spring 2014, we were encouraged to also explore the potential for Common Libraries to draw upon the peer-to-peer and sharing economy movement in future – culminating in receipt of an international OuiShare Award. And, we have sought from the outset to enable income generation by ‘library enterprises’.

## Our Vision & Values

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We want to evolve libraries so that they function as trusted and impartial platforms for the production, exchange and consumption of knowledge and know-how in both tangible locations and virtual spaces. Our aim is to empower people to co-design and deliver new library services, such that they are responsive to technological advancements and fast-changing local needs. The intention, then, is to revitalise the public library ethos and render library services more relevant and sustainable in their appeal to broad-ranging audiences.

## What are Common Libraries?

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### Common Libraries

- Recognise the value of local or ‘common’ knowledge and know-how – enabling library users to contribute knowledge and know-how to as well as access information from the library;
- Provide the encouragement, tools and support needed to transform libraries into community publishing platforms, and nurture peer-to-peer learning, collaboration and prototyping amongst library users to help them share their know-how and develop new ideas;
- Go beyond the co-location of multi-media publishing or maker spaces within libraries to integrate related activities and outputs into the very functioning of the library and, with that, grow the common pool of knowledge and know-how it offers;
- Recognise any scope that it has for income generation and, if desired and practicable, takes effective measures to exploit this in the interests of sustaining public libraries on an open source and social enterprise footing;
- Consider and deal effectively with intellectual property and copyright issues, exploring and exploiting emergent creative and ubiquitous commons licensing amongst other leading-edge solutions;
- Are able and willing to share and pool resources with other common libraries;
- Proactively reach out to their own community base and the wider library and creative community; and
- Stay abreast of technological developments likely to be of use for their own purposes and those of their users and potential users.

Whether a library user would welcome help to write and publish their first book, share a family recipe, invite others to try out their hobby, or create an app in which they’re interested, Common Libraries help them realise their ambitions whilst capturing and sharing some aspect of their knowledge and know-how to also benefit others.

## Phase I

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In January 2014, we were fortunate to receive support from Arts Council England to begin exploring the potential to establish a network of Common Libraries, and three community enterprises would subsequently work with their local library authorities for a period of three months to explore the replicability of the concept beyond our first prototype at the Waiting Room in Colchester. A detailed project report is available [online](#) but, to summarise, we found:

**Common Libraries** – demonstrable interest in Common Libraries as a vehicle for exploring the evolution of public library services – both at home and overseas – as a result of our having communicated the initiative to engage a wider community of interest.

**Awareness and Understanding** – proactive engagement of project partners and library authorities with whom we worked resulted in improved understanding of the 'hacking' and 'making' landscape. It also engendered an ability and willingness to co-produce practical plans to progress prototyping efforts.

**User Needs and Co-Production** – a greater degree of comfort amongst library authorities and more immediate community interest in relation to traditional 'making' as compared with 'hacking'. Real value in the how-to resources developed, which pointed towards a series of steps that less confident commissioners/providers might look to take in making a start, as well as to the importance of co-producing services with communities themselves.

**Business Models & 'Library Enterprises'** – interest in deploying the membership model to which we introduced participants, as well as MakerKit development and sale.

**Knowledge, Skills, Capacity & Entrepreneurship** – opportunities and challenges surrounding the knowledge, skills, capacity and entrepreneurship inherent in organisations that might wish to establish Common Libraries.

We also concluded that encouragement and investment in the capacity to innovate is required if Common Libraries are to become a more mainstream endeavour in future.

### Accordingly, we recommended:

- A series of inspire and inform events for library service commissioners and providers hosted in hack/makerspaces – to disseminate the findings from our work, and raise awareness of the opportunities attaching to Common Libraries as one of a number of potentially forward-looking options in relation to library enterprise development.
- A programme of activity to broker relationships between library service commissioners/providers and hackers/makers
- A scheme to incentivise and/or support a number of library service commissioners and providers to co-locate hack-makerspaces within libraries.
- Further investment and work to take forward development of the integrated library-hack-makerspace model with existing and/or new prototypes, and additional investment to speed-up the production of MakerKits to enable market-testing.
- Forward support for Common Libraries as a platform for co-producing and prototyping innovative library services with commissioners, providers and/or users.

And, following a series of productive discussions about the lessons learned from Phase I, Arts Council England agreed to fund Common Futures to undertake a further phase of work.

## **Phase II – Project Rationale & Focus**

Phase II aimed to better understand the potential for Common Libraries, and affiliations between libraries and makerspaces, to enhance the appeal, resilience and sustainability of libraries in future.

### **Specifically, the project sought to test in greater depth:**

- The resonance of the Common Libraries “message”
- Interest from the range of stakeholders in establishing Common Libraries and forward support requirements
- Approaches to relationship brokerage: libraries with hackers, makers and creative communities
- The extent to which those approaches resulted in buy-in to/for Common Libraries
- The extent to which they resulted in MakerBox/Kit production (type, time-frame, etc.)
- The extent to which they resulted in interest in technology prototyping initiatives
- The extent to which they resulted in collaboration between the various stakeholders
- What else happened? (i.e. the ‘unexpected’)
- The point of sale materials, instructions, placement within a library context
- The level/nature demand for MakerBoxes and MakerKits + profitability for the host
- Interest in producing MakerBoxes/Kits amongst library users
- Micro-batch build methodology and repeat order process
- Satisfaction with the MakerBoxes/Kits amongst library staff and users
- Understanding of ‘Common Libraries’ – the “message”
- Interest in those operating models identified during Phase I and associated support requirements
- The scope for co-production of Common Libraries with a further cohort of library service providers

## **Phase II – Methodology**

The Project was designed to involve participants in an effective and imaginative way, and was delivered with a view to testing the Common Libraries concept and ethos across as many library services in England as possible.

In outline, the project comprised six stages, and involved the team in the following activities:-

### **A. PROJECT SET-UP**

### **B. DESIGN**

- i. Contact mapping to promote a “National Library Science Experiment”
- ii. Design of a “Hack the Library” day offer for advanced programme participants
- iii. Generic Common Libraries MakerBox design and copy development
- iv. Identification of x5 ‘Made at the Waiting Room’ creatives with whom to work
- v. Peer Production License development for MakerBox contents
- vi. ‘Made at the Waiting Room’ MakerBox and MakerKit design and copy development
- vii. Identification of x2 national Common Libraries event venues

### **C. PRODUCTION**

- i. Production of x500 generic Common Libraries MakerBoxes
- ii. Production of x50 'Made at the Waiting Room' MakerKits

### **D. PROMOTION**

- i. Dissemination of x500 generic Common Libraries MakerBoxes
- ii. Promotion of the "Hack the Library" day support offer
- iii. Promotion of the open call to trial MakerBox and MakerKit loans/sales
- iv. Promotion of x2 Inspire and Inform events via the project website / social media

### **E. IMPLEMENTATION**

- I. Selection process to determine x5 "Hack the Library" day & MakerBox/Kit hosts
- II. Scoping, planning and delivery of support to enable x5 "Hack the Library" days
- III. Dissemination of x50 'Made at the Waiting Room' MakerKits + support to integrate, present and track them at the local level
- IV. Organisation and delivery of x2 national Common Libraries events
- V. Production of event film footage

### **F. MONITORING AND REPORTING**

- I. Preparation and presentation of learning / outcomes from x5 "Hack the Library" days
- II. Collection, collation and presentation of MakerBox/Kit trial data
- III. Preparation and presentation of final project report
- IV. Publication and promotion of event film footage

Here, we present a Phase II – Project Report which summarizes the learning amassed in the course of conducting a National Library Science Experiment to loan Maker Instruction Sets to library users; supporting 'Hack the Library' days and the sale of Maker Kits in x5 locations; and delivering x2 Inspire and Inform events working with Maker Spaces in Newcastle and London. It also contains recommendations for Arts Council England, English Library Authorities and other interested parties as to possible next steps.

# PHASE II – ACTIVITIES

The Common Libraries initiative was established to ‘prototype the library of the future – today’ – to explore, develop and test new ways of working with library users and, in particular, to support innovation and the evolution of library services underpinned by new and emergent technologies.

Accordingly, we conducted a ‘National Library Science Experiment’ and supported ‘Hack the Library’ days to better understand the potential for Common Libraries to enhance the appeal, resilience and sustainability of libraries in future, before presenting our work at two national events for further discussion.



# National Library Science Experiment


## Design

In designing a 'National Library Science Experiment', we sought to test the resonance of the Common Libraries 'message' and, in particular, whether library service providers and users could be encouraged to conceive of the library of the future as a platform for the production, exchange and consumption of knowledge and know-how. In short, we wanted to understand the extent to which they might come to view the library as offering the means, and serve as an appropriate space, to contribute and share as well as access information.

## Production

We produced a generic Common Libraries MakerBox, inviting people to join our experiment which was framed as follows:

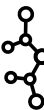
### Your Invitation



## Join a National Library Science Experiment

#### What is the experiment?

In 1931 the noted Indian librarian and mathematician, Ranganathan, proposed a theory for the operation of libraries based on five simple laws:



- 1. Books are for use
- 2. For every reader his [or her] book
- 3. For every book its reader
- 4. Save the time of the reader
- 5. The library is a growing organism


We would like to work with you and your library users to test the potential for local or 'common' knowledge and know-how to impact the fifth law – recognizing that the World Wide Web has afforded its users equal rights to read as well as write information online, such that libraries might conceivably evolve to do the same in practical settings.

#### How everyone can participate?


Almost everything you need to participate is included in this box – simply read the Maker Kits leaflet enclosed, download and print the poster, then, follow the simple instructions available online at [www.commonlibraries.cc/join](http://www.commonlibraries.cc/join) to promote, test and tell us about interest in Common Libraries amongst your users.

#### Apply for additional support


In addition to joining our Library Science Experiment, you are invited to:



Apply to receive hands-on support to help you engage your creative communities and assess local interest in establishing Common Libraries;




Apply to become 1 of 5 libraries hosting Maker Instruction Sets as well as Maker Kits to lead the way and help us assess interest in them across the country; and/or



Apply to attend a free event to learn more about Common Libraries, experience hacking and making first-hand, and hear about the outcome of this experiment.

#### Application Deadline: 15th January 2015

We hope that, having read a little bit about our ideas for the library of the future, you will wish to join others in exploring ways in which libraries can become more sustainable, responsive and resilient as the challenges - and possibilities - of the 21st century knowledge economy become ever more apparent.

[www.commonlibraries.cc/join](http://www.commonlibraries.cc/join) 



Our generic MakerBox contained an Introduction to Maker Instruction Sets and Kits, together with 5 Maker Instruction Sets that were 'Made at the Waiting Room' in Colchester by creative users – namely:

**Finger Knitting** by Alex Davis

**Make a Pinhole Camera** by Jack Briggs-Miller

**Learn to Cross Stitch** by Clare Sams

**Bake Macaroons** by Emma Chesters

**Build a Digital Contact Microphone** by Phil Mill

**Each Maker Instruction Set included:**

- Information about its creator
- Full instructions for a creative project
- List and sources of the tools and materials required
- Instruction on how to undertake the project safely
- Tips and hints and sources of further guidance
- Advice on getting involved in similar creative activities

An example we made available online introduces people to Cross Stitch.



## Promotion

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We sent MakerBoxes to senior officers in every library authority in England as well as to 230 community-led libraries in December 2014, and promoted the experiment extensively via the Common Libraries website as well as using social media.

### Recipients of our MakerBoxes were invited to:

- Add the 5 Maker Instruction Sets to their Library Management System by title and ISBN to enable loans to be monitored;
- Display the Maker Instruction Sets prominently, along with a [publicity poster](#) we provided as a download, and promote interest by all other available means – including social media;
- Offer the items for loan, monitor borrowing, and send us associated data together with staff and user feedback over a period of 3 months.

They were also asked to encourage library users to contribute their own knowledge and know-how via an [online form](#), which provides a template for generating new Instruction Sets, and to support them in completing it.

In addition to basic participation in the National Library Science Experiment outlined above, recipients of our MakerBox were invited to:

- Apply to receive hands-on support to help them engage their creative communities and assess local interest in establishing Common Libraries;
- Apply to become 1 of 5 libraries to also host MakerKits (i.e. Maker Instruction Sets boxed and supplied with the materials required to undertake the project described) – to help us assess interest in the latter as items for sale across the country; and
- Attend a free event in Newcastle or London to learn more about Common Libraries, experience hacking and making first-hand, and hear about the outcome of this experiment in March 2015.

## Implementation

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Conducting our National Library Science Experiment involved the recruitment of basic and advanced programme participants, the dispatch of x50 MakerKits to our x5 advanced participants, and ongoing promotion of Maker Instruction Sets and Kits made available for loan and sale in libraries and via social media working in conjunction with participants.

## Recruitment

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We were contacted by 35 library service providers about participation in the basic experiment to loan the Maker Instruction Sets we issued, of which, 16 subsequently supplied monitoring information at regular intervals together with detailed feedback to inform the learning amassed in the course of the experiment (see: Appendix 1). We recruited 5 programme participants to host Maker Kits – with whom we also agreed to work in greater depth – after soliciting detailed applications from 10 library service providers:

<b>Library Authority</b>	<b>Library/Entity</b>
Essex County Council	Mersea Library
London Borough of Lewisham	Deptford Lounge
Northamptonshire	Northampton Central Library
South Tyneside	South Shields Central Library
Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton Central Library



## *Promotion of Maker Instruction Sets and Kits*

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Programme participants developed attractive displays to promote the Maker Instruction Sets and Kits we issued in a variety of settings.

A number were proactive in drawing attention to their participation via twitter and Facebook – notably, Blackpool, Oldham and Wakefield.

Others generated promotional Blogs for the Common Libraries website, as per Newcastle, <http://commonlibraries.cc/guest-post-aude-charillon-newcastle-libraries/> to accompany our own coverage online as the experiment went 'live':

Our National Library Science Experiment Gets Underway:  
<http://commonlibraries.cc/our-national-library-science-experiment-gets-underway/>

Guest Post: Marc De'ath – The Waiting Room:  
<http://commonlibraries.cc/guest-post-marc-death-the-waiting-room/>

## **Results, Feedback & Lessons Learned**

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We designed and deployed standardised monitoring instruments to solicit data and feedback from programme participants about the loan and sale of Maker Instruction Sets and Maker Kits respectively. The data concerning loans and sales is provided below, as is a summary of the feedback we received from participants.

### *Statistics: Maker Instruction Sets Loaned*

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ISBN	Maker Instruction Set	27 Feb 2015	27 Mar 2015	
978-0-9931670-2-7	Finger Knitting	7	6	13
978-0-9931670-0-3	Build a Pin-Hole Camera	7	6	13
978-0-9931670-1-0	Cross Stitching	2	4	6
978-0-9931670-3-4	Making Macaroons	7	2	9
978-0-9931670-4-1	DIY 'Contact' Microphone	2	5	7
<b>Totals</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>48</b>

### *Statistics: Maker Kits Sold*

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ISBN	Maker Instruction Set	27 Feb 2015	27 Mar 2015	
978-0-9931670-2-7	Finger Knitting	0	0	0
978-0-9931670-0-3	Build a Pin-Hole Camera	1	0	1
978-0-9931670-1-0	Cross Stitching	0	0	0
978-0-9931670-3-4	Making Macaroons	0	1	1
978-0-9931670-4-1	DIY 'Contact' Microphone	1	1	2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

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## *Statistics: Results Summarized*

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Where data concerning Maker Instruction Set loans and Kit sales is concerned, we wish to underline:

1. the relatively modest sample size with which we worked in both instances – 16 libraries in respect of data concerned with loans, 5 libraries in respect of data concerned with sales;
2. the time it took some participants to become actively involved in promoting and monitoring Maker Instruction Set loans – only during March itself in some places;
3. the decision taken by advanced programme participants to only promote and monitor Maker Kit sales during / after hosting their ‘Hack the Library’ day (i.e. in mid-late March) – with the exception of LB Lewisham, whose return accounts for 50% of total sales figures. Notably, however, in South Tyneside, 7 local Maker Kits were developed integral to the experiment, and 5 of them were sold on its ‘Hack the Library’ day. And, a further 3 Maker Kits were sold in Northamptonshire during April, upon their being moved to a smaller rural library location in Brixworth – where the library has solid connections to the local WI;
4. differences in the length of loan period attaching to items promoted in different places, which impacted the scope for repeat lending in the course of the experiment, and the absence of geographic or thematic trends which would point towards there being markedly more interest in one Maker Instruction Set / Kit than another (save insofar as ‘Cross Stitching’ proved of least interest – both from the point of view of loans and sales).
5. Improved loan/sales figures where Instruction Sets/Kits were prominently displayed proximate to staffed information points, rather than self-service machines, accompanied by dedicated flyers, and presented to enable users to explore their contents OR discussed face-to-face with library users at ‘Hack the Library’ events; and
6. the impact of loan stock in Newcastle which comprised 10 rather than the standard 5 Maker Instruction Sets issued to other authorities – and which was loaned for shorter than average periods to individual library users (for up to 2 weeks versus 3-4 weeks in most other places) – such that loans from Newcastle account for almost 1/3 of the total stock lent by our 16 regular reporting participants in the basic experiment. On average, 3 Maker Instruction Sets were loaned from libraries that did not return a ‘nil result’ overall over a period of six weeks. Notably, also, when April’s return is taken into account, a further 7 loans were made in Northamptonshire upon Maker Instruction Sets being moved to a smaller rural library location in Brixworth.

## Written Feedback from the Experiment

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We solicited written feedback from participants in the experiment via a standard questionnaire returned to us at the end of March 2015 and this is summarized below.

### Loaning Maker Instruction Sets

#### **Q1 – Library Personnel: Attitudes and Suggestions**

- To the Experiment, the broader Common Libraries initiative and regarding the clarity and effectiveness of the ‘message’
- How understanding of the potential to engage creative communities and support knowledge production and sharing amongst library personnel might be improved

The concept, once explained to staff and library customers, was well understood and welcomed, although there was a perceived challenge to ensure the maker movement differentiated itself from regular creative activities that were already taking place within libraries, and didn’t distract from existing Adult Learning offers. The concept of contributing knowledge to the library was received universally positively as ‘a good idea’ – although, some people felt it would benefit from a strong campaign locally to get the message across to residents and communities. There were some challenges around the size and attractiveness of the packaging, with some people questioning whether it could have been more ‘eye catching’ and/or bigger. There was also a request for further clarity about the knowledge production and income generation elements of the scheme. Finally, there was a suggestion that the phrase “Hack the Library” could be confusing, as some people thought it referred to a traditional IT hack, so perhaps some re-branding / clarification going forward around brand awareness would be helpful.

#### **Q2 – Library Users: Attitudes and Suggestions**

- How did users rate their overall experience of the different Maker Instruction Sets?
- Was feedback sought proactively by library personnel and, if so, how?
- Were some Maker Instruction Sets more interesting or successful and, if so, why?

Several Maker Instruction Sets were overdue at the time of reporting – which perhaps indicates that users liked them – but, in most instances, library personnel had not proactively sought feedback from users to inform the findings from the experiment. There were suggestions from some staff that with library services moving to a more digital environment, it would be a good idea to also have an online version of Maker Instruction Sets and/or a print-on-demand service in future. In one instance, the Maker Instruction Sets were used as the basis for a new Science Club being run from the library fortnightly for children; this was felt to be a very positive development, with encouraging feedback from attendees. In the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, staff opted to use the Baking Macaroons Instruction Set in a group setting and, as a result, a library user stepped forward and now runs a fortnightly ‘We Can Make Club’; so far, those involved have made lava lamps, planted seeds and, even, made a bird house!



### **Q3 – Interest in / Potential to Retail Maker Kits**

- Would your library service or users be interested? What topics or projects would be most engaging? If not interested, why not?

Some people felt there would be demand for Kits retailing at £5-£10 – especially if they were produced by local small businesses with popular products, e.g. “how to bake our famous parkin by ‘a well-known local bakery’”. Others thought that a package of materials (for example, a ‘recommended for beginners’ library knitting book with some knitting needles and instructions/lesson on YouTube from a local tutor) were more likely to appeal. One challenge cited was that, in an area where there are very low levels of income, the decision was taken to use Instruction Sets and Kits to underpin free activities. It was felt that there may be some interest in purchasing the Kits, but that take-up would not be high due to associated costs. That said, the participant based in the most deprived community ultimately recorded more sales of Maker Kits (albeit, locally produced Maker Kits) than anywhere else.

### **Q4 – Potential Interest in Producing Maker Kits to Further Embed the Creative Use of Libraries and Generate Income on a Joint Venture Basis**

- Would your library service or users be interested? What topics or projects would be most popular? What support would you need to implement such an enterprise? If not likely or not supported, why not?

Several participants felt that library staff, customers and local residents would be able and willing to produce Maker Instruction Sets and/or Kits. For example, in Lewisham, it was felt that with a wide range of artists and arts organizations locally, Kits concerned with creative writing, craft, film, music could be developed. Practical support would be needed around how the boxes were put together, and where to buy affordable materials, although part of the community engagement could be people coming together to make the boxes ready for sale.

The ‘Hack the Library’ event at Northampton Central Library demonstrated that there are a number of graduates who would be interested in developing Maker Kits in conjunction with Libraries. Specific examples included ‘Customising T-Shirts’ and Basic Kitchen Skills (which would, perhaps, lend themselves more to Maker Instruction Set than Maker Kit development in the first instance).

In South Tyneside, 7 Maker Kits were created integral to the experiment, and 5 were sold on its ‘Hack the Library’ day; although based upon a small sample, this perhaps showed that cheaper craft Kits offered for sale could prove popular and, in particular, when targeted toward a young female audience. In addition, the library service there already works with the local mental health awareness organization, Tyneside MIND, and they were very interested in using this model in conjunction with the library service to impact health outcomes, because it was noted that there was an obvious therapeutic benefit in helping to eliminate or reduce stress levels amongst library users.

### **Q5 – Respondent’s Own Attitude and Suggestions**

- If you were invited to contribute your knowledge and know-how to a public library in the form of Maker Instructions / a Maker Kit, what would you like to share with other library users? What help would you welcome when doing so?

One respondent wanted to share their favourite vegetarian recipes, although s/he wasn’t sure how this would work as a Maker Kit with ingredients. Another wanted to look at book folding and card making, although they wondered whether the range of materials needed could prove prohibitive from the point of view of cost; in their town, there were some services such as Artfuel that offer creative outlets, so they felt that partnering with them could be helpful. Overall, most people felt that the product must look appealing, be trustworthy, and as a package be clearly worth the outlay. So, the range of possible Maker Kits aside, some support concerned with ‘productisation’ could be useful in future.

## Stocking and Selling Maker Kits

### **Q1 – Library Personnel Attitudes and Suggestions**

- Views on the Maker Instruction Sets and Maker Kits supplied
- Is the difference Between Maker Instruction Sets and Maker Kits understood?
- Are library personnel broadly supportive – or otherwise – of Maker Instructions being made available for borrowing and Maker Kits being offered for sale in public libraries?
- How could we encourage buy-in amongst library personnel across your service and elsewhere to support community publishing by your library users?

In one library, 2 Maker Instruction Sets were borrowed and 2 Maker Kits were bought, suggesting there was interest in both which could be built upon. One respondent suggested they could encourage buy-in through promoting the Kits more widely across libraries and inviting customers to submit their own ideas as to what Kits they would like to contribute to the collection. Most staff were said to understand the distinction between the Kits and the Instruction Sets quite clearly. Some even thought of library users who might be interested in creating Kits themselves – which were followed up by inviting them to take part in their ‘Hack the Library’ day. Staff were generally supportive of the idea, although some were more sceptical of the sales element; some didn’t think that the Kits would sell well and, in particular, in deprived settings. Library personnel were generally very enthusiastic about the Kits and believed they had been designed and put together extremely well. It was felt the contents for each box were relevant and resulted in staff and customers alike becoming curious about their contents and associated project. In one area, it was felt that a dedicated event or opportunity to meet with the person who created each box would increase interest and sales.



### **Q2 – Library User Attitudes and Suggestions**

- How users rate their overall experience of the different Maker Kits – feedback on viewing or buying the different Maker Kits?
- Were there particular questions or comments that recurred?
- Was feedback sought proactively and if so, how?
- Were some Maker Kits more interesting or successful and, if so, why was this?

There was only very limited feedback from library users about Maker Kits outlined by respondents to our questionnaire, although there was interest in one area, at the ‘Hack the Lounge’ day, in the Kits – particularly the ones which were demonstrated as per the finger knitting Kit. Staff in Lewisham felt they could generate further ideas for Kits and feedback from libraries retailing Kits as well as through the use of social media.

### **Q3 – If Common Libraries were Established Across the Country, what Types of Maker Kit would be of Most Interest to Your Library Users?**

Many respondents felt that Kits around making and craft, especially in areas that have a large artistic population, would be of most interest to library users. They were also particularly interested in the scope to retail and/or develop digital Kits – perhaps leading on from issue of the DIY Microphone Instructions and Kit. There was considerable interest in creative writing and storytelling, also, so it was felt writing exercises or how to tell a good story might be of interest. Some felt there could be demand for Kits based on heritage or regional specialties but were less attached to the ‘locally distinctive’ angle which underpins the Common Libraries initiative than anticipated.

### **Q4 – Potential Interest in Producing Full Maker Kits to Further Embed the Creative Use of Libraries and Generate Income on a Joint Venture Basis**

- Do you think your library service and/or users are interested in and/or able to produce Maker Kits to further encourage the creative use of public libraries but also to help generate an income for you/them on a joint venture basis as a result of your participation in the programme?
- Do you know what topics your users are well-placed to cover (in terms of Maker Kits) if you are considering the introduction of a themed Common Library?
- Can you tell us what support you think would be welcome to put that into practice?

Many authorities felt that library staff, existing users and local residents would be able and willing to produce Maker Kits. One authority explained that they were attempting to engage ethnic minority communities by encouraging a lady to produce a Kit to enable the purchaser to create the perfect pakora or onion bhaji. Another was going to develop the Common Library established in the course of participating in the programme, but wanted to present it as a “Know How Swap Shop”, indicating that the first would likely be based around local interest in gardening.

Elsewhere, a respondent felt there was potential to pursue the creation of Maker Kits with some of their users going forward, as well as with some of the groups that already meet in their venues. They were keen to focus on the knowledge exchange element of this experiment initially and see where that led. They foresaw a programme of workshops or learning days where such Kits could be sold, rather than as items permanently on sale. They felt this was more likely to result in sales rather than just by stocking Kits in libraries, as there would be the explanation and interest that such an activity can generate. Topics they wanted to follow up were sewing, patchwork, rag-rugs, lace, and calligraphy. Another felt that artisan cooking would be good as well as materials to aid meditation.

### **Q5 – Respondent’s Own Attitude and Suggestions**

- If you were invited to contribute your knowledge and know-how to a public library in the form of a Maker Kit, what would you like to share with other library users?
- What help would you welcome in doing so?
- On what basis would you be prepared to contribute / license use of the same by others?

Many authorities wanted to continue with the experiment of producing their own Kits and, to that end, were utilising display cases to display the Maker Kits they produced as well as associated books and information about their contents. Others said that they needed to extend the pilot to other libraries in order to fully gauge interest. They also wanted to engage local partners to gather information about the types of Kits that could be produced in future.



## Conclusions

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Phase II activities linked to our conducting a 'National Library Science Experiment' successfully demonstrated the resonance of the Common Libraries message with a cohort of public library personnel and users – in particular, where the loan and sale of user produced knowledge and know-how in the form of Maker Instruction Sets and Kits is concerned; with a sample of 20% of library authorities in England expressing initial interest and 10% actively participating. It is, however, notable that so little interest flowed from those community-led libraries we contacted, given that their income generation needs were amongst the key drivers for establishing the Common Libraries initiative originally. Whilst that could stem from challenges at the local level surrounding their capacity to engage with the experiment, we are more inclined to think that it reflects inadequacies in our promotional strategy / materials – that is, to infer from the lack of feedback received from them that they were unable to make sense of our invitation and/or its 'fit' with their understanding of the core library offer – although we are unable to verify as much.

Participants in the basic experiment were considerably less likely to grasp and/or encourage library users to contribute their own knowledge and know-how. Moreover, the feedback received from those authorities with whom we worked in-depth points toward the potential for library user contributions to flow from dedicated promotional events as well as regular group activities concerned with knowledge sharing. As such, dedicated events and/or meet-ups are deemed more likely to encourage others to establish Common Libraries at the local level in future than is the mere stocking of Maker Instruction Sets and Kits and/or the provision and central maintenance of an online portal to facilitate Maker Instruction Set development amongst creative library users (at least, until such time as the Common Libraries message really resonates with library users). Of course, the affiliation, co-location and integration of functioning makerspaces with libraries is also considered key in this regard, but Phase II does underline that community engagement and culture change are paramount if perceptions and usage of libraries are to evolve beyond the 'traditional'.

In the final analysis, we were heartily encouraged by the outcomes and feedback from the 'National Library Science Experiment' we conducted. In particular, where library personnel proved effective advocates for Maker Instruction Sets and Kits or, else, used them to stimulate interest in regular knowledge sharing and/or making activities within libraries or, indeed, opted to 'make their own' – the experiment proved successful. Our efforts to promote and prototype the loan and sale of Maker Instruction Sets and Kits that were 'Made at the Waiting Room' working with library services across the country is only a 'first step', and too nascent an initiative from which to derive detailed findings upon which to base income generation projections, or plans for up-scaling their production and distribution in future. More needs to be done to establish a pioneers network of Common Libraries, then, if the aspiration to grow the common pool of knowledge and know-how that could be contributed at the local level then shared through libraries is to be realised over the months and years to come.

# Hack the Library!

In supporting x5 programme participants to organise a ‘Hack the Library’ day, we sought to test interest amongst a range of stakeholders in each locale in establishing Common Libraries, as well as the effectiveness of different approaches to brokering relationships between libraries, hackers, makers and creative communities. We worked with them to deploy pertinent [Resources](#) developed during Phase I and, in particular, to adapt the [Maker Thursday](#) event format successfully deployed at the Waiting Room in Colchester. The resultant events were intended to enable each library to forge appropriate and mutually beneficial relationships between libraries, hackers and makers in practical settings, and to help identify quick prototyping wins – including the production of Maker Instruction Sets for borrowing and Maker Kits for purchasing.

## Design

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**Advanced Phase II programme participants received an on-site visit from the Common Libraries team to**

- Introduce the Common Libraries concept to library personnel, senior managers and other interested parties in-depth;
- Explore the local creative landscape and select an appropriate library venue for their ‘Hack the Library’ day; and
- Co-produce a Rapid Action Plan to determine any thematic focus, key stakeholders to be engaged, organisational requirements as well as to develop a related promotional strategy.

We also organised a webinar, led by Marc De’ath, who introduced the Waiting Room in Colchester and the approach taken there to organising ‘Maker Thursday’ events.

In short, ‘Maker Thursdays’ offer regular opportunities to meet and learn from a local maker and participate in making activities with the maker on a group basis; forthcoming events at the Waiting Room will cover, for example, a ‘Stitch and Bitch: Pimp my Apron’ and ‘Ceramics Takeover’ workshop. Each one is led by a local maker who is prepared to share his or her knowledge and expertise with interested parties on a pro bono basis, and materials are made available to participants to enable ‘access for all’. The aim, then, where Phase II activities are concerned, was to deliver a highly interactive experience to stimulate interest amongst existing as well as prospective library users in establishing Common Libraries at the local level – and, in particular, to engage creative communities in a dialogue to better understand their interests, aspirations and any support requirements they might have where contributing and/or sharing their knowledge and know-how to libraries was concerned.

Notably, the project team adopted the phrase ‘Hack the Library’ during the set-up phase, and most programme participants opted to make use of it for promotional purposes (although, Stockton-on-Tees opted to brand their event at the local level). Feedback from programme participants indicates that our suggested ‘brand’ might resonate with more digitally savvy individuals, but is less likely to appeal to other makers and library users in general.

## Development

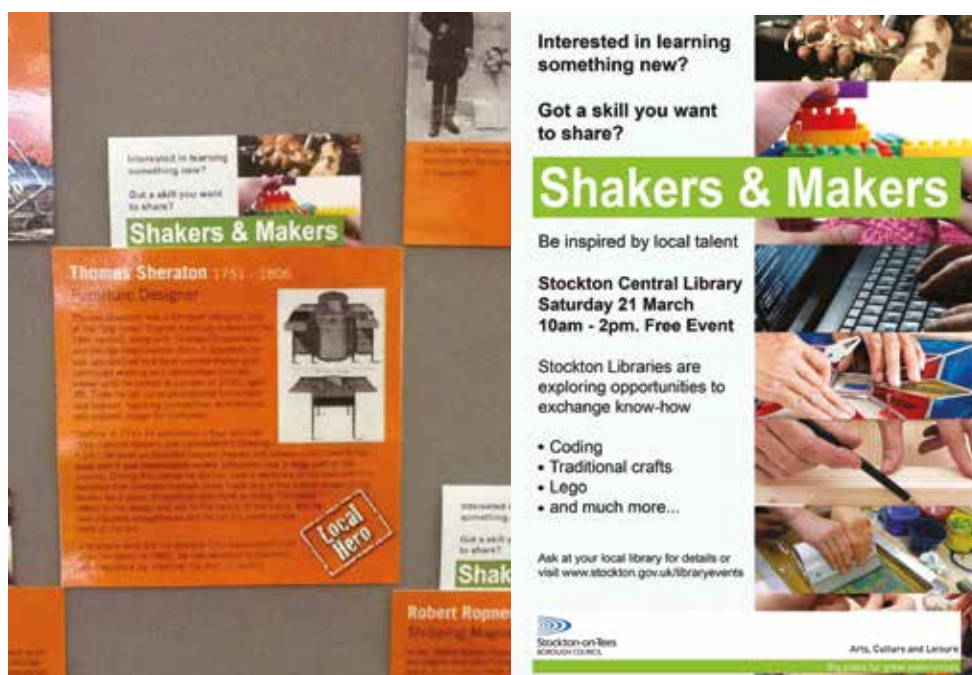
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Makerspaces and making activities are growing in [number](#) and popularity year-on-year. The temptation is to take a “cookie-cutter” approach to replication, and build from the top down where design is concerned – the very opposite of the approach taken by grass-root groups. Instead, we recommend libraries encourage diversity so that Common Libraries celebrate a community’s local design and manufacturing heritage, harness their unique identity, and better serve individual needs and interests – what is sometimes referred to as building upon the fine grain. Understanding your local landscape allows you to develop a space with rather than for your community, and affords your Common Library greater resilience, as well as helping you to develop an extended network of support. This, in turn, reduces the burden placed upon central resources over time. People will respect, use and help maintain facilities and equipment, as well as staff regular making activities, if you nurture a genuine sense of ownership amongst them when trying to establish a peer-to-peer or give-get style platform for knowledge exchange.

**Accordingly, we encouraged advanced programme participants to first consider:**

- What is your local area like?
- What type of hacking / making activities are most appropriate / of most interest to your local community?
- Are there organizations already operating within your area that a Common Library could build upon?

This exercise resulted in a horticultural theme being pursued at Mersea Library for part of the day – <http://commonlibraries.cc/guest-post-tabitha-knight-mersea-library-essex/> – and local event branding in Stockton-on-Tees to reflect its association and history of ‘Shakers and Makers’: <http://commonlibraries.cc/tshakers-and-makers-stockton/> In most places, efforts to engage broad-ranging partners and stakeholders were made in advance to secure a creative presence from relevant agencies and organisations on the day itself – so, either a bazaar-style ‘show and tell’ approach was pursued and/or library users were invited to get involved directly with making in a group setting. Elsewhere, a greater emphasis was placed upon creative input on the part of library staff or, else, outreach to and through the local networks with which they are embedded as local residents. For example, staff in South Tyneside were encouraged to capture their own knowledge and know-how, and to rapidly prototype Maker Instruction Sets and Kits of their own for demonstration, loan and sale on the day.



Ultimately, the approach adopted at Mersea library differed from that of a town centre library scheduled to play its part in a wider programme of events in Stockton on the same day and, again, from that of a library in Lewisham that benefits from contemporary multi-media production facilities on-site as well as from being situated in the midst of a vibrant and very active creative community. There was, then, some consistency in the design and development of ‘Hack the Library’ days supported through Phase II activities. But, each proved unique, as intended – building upon its proximate creative scene and local stakeholders to engage library users in a range of making activities.

## Promotion

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The 5 events we supported integral to Phase II activities were each scheduled to take place on a Saturday in March 2015 as follows:

- **'Hack the Library'** at [Mersea Library](#), Colchester, Essex – 7th March
- **'Hack the Lounge'** at [Deptford Lounge](#), Lewisham – 14th March
- **'Hack the Library'** at [Northamptonshire Central Library](#), Northampton – 14th March
- **'Shakers and Makers'** at [Stockton Central Library](#), Stockton – 21st March
- **'Hack the Library'** at South Shields [Central Library](#), South Tyneside – 28th March

The Common Libraries website and social media were used extensively to promote them online – resulting in a series of promotional blog posts from each of our programme participants, Twitter and Facebook coverage, as well as the most visited post ever published by Lewisham Libraries:

- [Hacking Essex Libraries](#) by Paul Probert
- [Guest Post: Tabitha Knight, Mersea Library](#)
- [Common Libraries Come to Lewisham](#) by Joanne Moulton
- [Hack the Lounge! Deptford – 14.03.15](#)
- [Hack the Library Northamptonshire](#) by Carl Dorney
- [Guest Post: Nikita Thanki, LibraryPlus](#)
- [Shakers and Makers in Stockton](#) by Mark Freeman
- [Past Creators to Inspire Future Makers in Stockton](#) by Emma Tennant
- [Co-Producing Common Libraries in South Tyneside](#) by Russell Hall

These promotional tools were deployed alongside more traditional posters, newsletters and dedicated flyers developed by the library service in each locale:



# HACK THE LIBRARY!

**9:30 - 12:30**

Bee Seed Bombing  
With local Beekeepers  
+ Maker Kits

In association with  
**commonLIBRARIES**

**2-5PM**

Hand Lettering  
Workshop

With local Artist  
Doug Hirst

**5PM ONWARDS...**

*the*  
**BIG-K  
BUS**

Bring your own refreshments, an acoustic instrument or just your voice and thrash through 5 classic tracks.

Song sheets available from the library.



**WEST MERSEA LIBRARY**

**7TH MARCH** (01206) 383321  
westmersea.library@essex.gov.uk



Notably, timeframes for the promotion of events did not permit programme participants to map and create a directory of local creatives to support maker community engagement efforts as per the Resources developed during Phase I. As a result, most adopted a less targeted approach to marketing their events than might more readily have resulted in core groups of parties interested in anchoring the set-up of a Common Library emerging in each instance.

## Implementation

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### *Mersea Library, Essex*

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At Mersea Library, staff organised informal drop-in events to introduce people to seed-bomb making, bee-keeping and hand-lettering, and they were supported by library users with the requisite interests and skills in sessions that were well-attended by families with young children both in the morning and afternoon. The event afforded staff an opportunity to share the Maker Instruction Sets and Kits concept with local knowledge holders and library users which, in turn, afforded the Project Team new insight into how they could be iterated and made to work to best effect. Most people we talked to grasped the concept of contributing their knowledge and know-how, the benefits to them as individuals, and why the library is the natural home for that knowledge. From a local meditation expert to the resident bee keepers, almost everyone wanted to create a box about something they knew or cared about – although, we need to work harder on how people access that knowledge, and how it is presented in a library setting once captured.

For further information about the ‘Hack the Library’ event hosted at Mersea Library, visit: <http://commonlibraries.cc/hackthelibrary/>



## Deptford Lounge

At Deptford Lounge, the 'Hack the Lounge' event benefited from a high profile social media promotion campaign together with a busy urban location. A 'library take-over' event, as per Mersea, was deemed inappropriate. So, staff adopted more of a 'show and tell' approach and 'bazaar' style set-up, such that local creative entrepreneurs and businesses could share something about their work with library users in the course of them visiting the library. This resulted, amongst other things, in conversations about digital heritage projects as well as music production and associated career opportunities.

Supported by the Project Team, staff also invited people to try out the Finger Knitting Maker Kit 'Made at the Waiting Room' which, once again, resulted in valuable discussion and learning about how they might be improved upon in future. Notably, whilst the day itself proved interesting and enjoyable, the Project Team were less convinced of its potential to result in a core group of creatives who might anchor the establishment of a makerspace and/or contribute their knowledge and know-how to a Common Library in future.

For further information about 'Hack the Lounge' hosted at Deptford Lounge, visit: <http://commonlibraries.cc/deptford/>



### Northamptonshire Central Library

At Northamptonshire Central Library, staff organized perhaps the least interactive of our 5 events from the point of view of offering making activities, notwithstanding they made lego-making sets available to encourage interest and play amongst library users alongside a creative presence from SoapBox Press and Three Dragons – who were on-hand throughout the afternoon to talk about e-zine publishing and software development. Despite having disseminated flyers the length of Northampton’s High Street, the library remained relatively quiet on the day itself, and the ‘bazaar’ style set-up might have benefited from direct promotion at the entrance to the library building to better orient prospective visitors.

A number of in-depth conversations with makers and creatives were, nonetheless, made possible as a direct result of online marketing, which peaked interest amongst founder members of a local hackerspace ahead of the event amongst others. But, on balance, staff appeared less confident about explaining and stimulating interest in Maker Instruction Set and Kit production than elsewhere, such that efforts to engage attendees with a view to taking next steps to establish either a maker space or Common Library on-site proved limited on the day. Notably, the event raised questions about the ideal location/scheduling for such activities, and it has since prompted staff to consider if and how they might work with or adapt aspects of kindred offers as per ‘Drink. Shop. Do’.

For further information about ‘Hack the Library’ hosted at Northamptonshire Central Library, visit: <http://commonlibraries.cc/northamptonshire/>

### Stockton Central Library

At Stockton Central Library, staff organized for a range of local making organisations to take over much of the ground floor on a ‘show and tell’ basis to coincide with a celebration event to launch the recently regenerated High Street. Amongst those represented were the Women’s Institute, North Yorkshire Calligraphers and Preston Park Museums and Grounds. Visitors could also try their hand at digital illustration and patchwork.

The combination of significant footfall to the high-street and eye-catching publicity throughout the library building succeeded in attracting people away from competing activities. And, once in situ, library users were encouraged to visit a dedicated stand where they were invited to take a look at our Maker Instruction Sets and Kits, and consider what knowledge and know-how they might like to contribute in future.





Stockton benefits from a range of publicly managed facilities which already support hacking and making as well as creative start-ups – including a museum with functioning forge and a dedicated business centre. As such, staff there were eager to understand the scope for the library to play its part in something of a ‘campus-based’ approach to establishing a Common Library from the outset (i.e. to explore an ‘affiliation’ or ‘partnership’ model, rather than consider integration of a makerspace within the library itself).



There was interest expressed on the day from organisations in need of appropriate space for undertaking group activities, as well as calls to support additional expert input to accommodate growing interest in some arts and crafts.

A handful of individuals also indicated that they would be able/willing to share their knowledge with others. However, whilst the event proved popular, further (and, different) work is needed going forward, if the aspiration is for the library to move beyond the sharing of local knowledge and know-how to support its publication, loan and/or sale is to be realised in future.

### South Shields Central Library

In South Tyneside, initial feedback from staff and users about those Maker Instruction Sets and Kits we issued pointed to concerns about the appearance of our ‘minimum viable products’, as well as the costs associated with Kit purchase in an area where residents and library users are largely from low-income families, job seekers and refugees/asylum seekers. Staff and users were nonetheless enthusiastic about the knowledge exchange aspect of the experiment and, as a result, opted to prototype 7 Maker Kits of their own which were, then, ably demonstrated (and, sold!) on the day itself – which attracted over 100 visitors.

Maker Kits produced and demonstrated included: Keith Dickenson (Sand Garden), Susan Inskip (Greetings Card), Angela Boyack (Beading), Cheryl Bradley, (Salt Dough -‘Singing Hinnies’), and Tracey Watson (Bath Bomb). Notably, staff were encouraged to share their ‘passion’ or hobby, as interest in building upon specialist ‘local knowledge and know-how’ was not deemed straightforward or, indeed, worthwhile in and of itself.

Looking ahead, staff at South Tyneside plan to take forward related activities in the form of a ‘Know How Swap Shop’ – with a focus upon gardening and horticulture in the first instance. Feedback from the event pointed to there being potential to pursue the production of Maker Instruction Sets and Kits with some users and, in particular, some of the groups that already meet in library venues. But, to begin with, staff are minded to think that a programme of workshops or learning days is needed first to ‘prepare the ground’. Notably, they are also interested in ‘forking’ the Maker Kit concept, working with Tyneside MIND, to explore the scope for them to deliver therapeutic benefits and, with that, impact local health outcomes.



## Conclusions

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We were able to derive incredibly helpful as well as broad-ranging lessons from our work with advanced programme participants in the course of supporting Phase II activities.

Libraries benefit from significant untapped data about the interests of existing library users which might usefully be exploited to shape targeted community engagement activities in future. Moreover, although staff themselves demonstrated a good grasp of their local communities and relevant organisations/related activities, they were apt to design and deliver 'one size fits all' events to appeal to 'numbers' of visitors, rather than perceiving a benefit in and understanding how to engage communities to appeal to a core group of (existing or prospective) library users with whom to co-produce new facilities/services over an extended period of time.

Libraries tend to approach event promotion in 'broadcast mode', and our programme participants made a concerted effort to design and disseminate attractive and engaging publicity via a range of channels (those points made about branding earlier aside). However, they are less adept (and, indeed, free) to approach marketing and communications from the point of view of stimulating the 'two-way' conversations that are now taken for granted by people of all ages but, in particular, those aged 16-45 whom, we think, are amongst those for whom the Common Libraries 'message' is most likely to resonate/appeal. Notably, this presents libraries with a significant challenge where appealing to and engaging with 'prospective' rather than existing users is concerned.

Libraries are well-networked and, therefore, capable of attracting input and support from a host of agencies and organisations that are well-placed to support 'skills sharing' activities in a library setting – whether in the form of structured events and/or partner-led group activities. But, they are less used to (and, perhaps, less confident) leveraging library assets (staff, stock and spaces) in a deliberate manner to encourage community-led activities to take hold beyond standalone events/activities. In particular, we noted that staff were more or less engaged and involved in the practical activities that took place, and in some instances, more apt to 'wait for people to approach them', then, explain the 'service offer to them' than they were to proactively engage visitors and approach people to understand 'what they were interested in and able/willing to offer to the library'; stock was not always curated and promoted to complement practical activities; and spaces themselves were organised to 'show and tell' (talk 'at' or 'to' people) rather than to invite and encourage co-production to nurture alternative community-led uses of libraries in future.

Ultimately, our 5 'Hack the Library' days tested the resonance of the Common Libraries message in a variety of ways – with library staff and users in broad-ranging settings – and underlined the significant scope for libraries to anchor 'skills sharing' opportunities in future. They also pointed toward the potential for staff and user generated content to flow from programmes of structured events and group activities over time, which when cross-referenced with the findings of our 'National Library Science Experiment', would appear to indicate that Common Libraries could be established and grow around the country in future. However, the combination of findings from our experiment and support for events has also taught us a great deal about the effectiveness of different approaches to brokering relationships between libraries, hackers, makers and creative communities. And, in particular, we believe a greater emphasis upon engaging a core group of people with whom to co-produce makerspace facilities and Common Libraries is needed in future, as per the work of Cultural Community Solutions to support the establishment of Creative Workspaces in London, if libraries are to move beyond the delivery of labour intensive event management for existing library users (often, with more traditional creative interests) towards an approach which truly integrates hacking and making, knowledge and skills sharing and community publishing with library services to appeal to new audiences.

# An Introduction to Common Libraries – National Events

We organized two national events to introduce Common Libraries to library leaders around the country, disseminate initial findings from our National Library Science Experiment, discuss the opportunities and challenges libraries perceived in engaging with our programme of work, as well as to enable attendees to experience hacking and making first-hand in the form of facilitated visits to appropriate venues at the end of March 2015.

The first event was kindly co-hosted by Newcastle Libraries and nearby Makerspace, and in addition to contributions from Marc De'ath of The Waiting Room, involved presentations and discussions led by the Carnegie UK Trust and local Library Lab participant, Aude Charillon, together with a guided tour and Q&A ably supported by Alistair MacDonald. The event was well-received such that feedback included:

“The Maker Space event in Newcastle was really useful for Oldham Library Service. We are establishing a maker space within our Central Library and are partners with Hack Oldham, the local hack space. Visiting the Newcastle Hack Space and finding out more about The Waiting Room was great and has certainly informed our maker space plans. Our plan was geared towards a place that mainly focused on sharing and building STEM skills, however we are now incorporating more craft and textile facilities. Oldham has embraced The Common Libraries project and are building our own instruction sets provided by the local community. The session in Newcastle was really informative and provided clarification of how we set it up in our services. The enthusiasm for the project was infectious and our plan is to have a collection of instructions in our libraries and at Hack Oldham. The Common Libraries project coupled with our maker space plans will see Oldham Libraries adapt and evolve. The ideas have proved popular with our community and fit in with our corporate values of working with a resident focus. This in turn enables the library service to promote and emphasise the value and impact we have within the borough to Council leaders.”

– Kate Smyth, Library Development Officer, Oldham Libraries

The second event took place at the Blackhorse Workshop in Walthamstow and benefited from a presentation from Lorna Lee (Head of Culture and Heritage) at the London Borough of Waltham Forest about the approach taken by the library service there to engaging hackers, makers and creative communities, as well as a Q&A session with cabinet maker, Nadine Dillon. The event also involved a guided tour led by Toby Poolman, who introduces the facilities in this short film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJW5Vq9cVCA>



A total of 50 people registered to attend our national events, and a series of vox pops made available online captures participants learning from the day, together with their thoughts about possible next steps – as per this short film featuring Joanne Moulton (Library Service Development Manager, LB Lewisham): <https://vimeo.com/130534739>



You can access an overview of the ideas that were discussed which highlights understanding of as well as interest in the scope for libraries to encourage contributions of knowledge and know-how from library users going forward: <https://vimeo.com/130313058>



# Phase II – Conclusions & Recommendations

Phase II activities successfully demonstrated the resonance of the Common Libraries message with a cohort of public library personnel and users in England. It illustrated interest amongst library users in borrowing Maker Instruction Sets that were 'Made at the Waiting Room', and it pointed toward the real potential for Maker Kits to be produced at the local level when underpinned by a structured programme of knowledge and skills sharing events and/or group activities.

## The key lessons learned concerned:

- How to engage library authorities and community-led libraries in experimentation and prototyping, and support them effectively to move beyond delivery of 'traditional' library services in the face of competing priorities;
- How to encourage library staff and users to conceive of libraries as platforms – as much for contributing as for accessing and sharing information, knowledge and know-how – in future;
- How to build confidence and capacity so as to contribute to a step-change in the approach taken by most library services to marketing and promotion, community engagement and the co-production of new facilities and services and, with that, help them appeal to prospective as well as existing library users going forward;
- How to help libraries move beyond event or activity management towards an approach which truly integrates hacking and making, knowledge and skills sharing, and community publishing with existing library services; and
- How to encourage forward activity or 'next steps' following an initial period of exploration, development and testing of a concept in a number of practical settings.

We're pleased to report that the Common Libraries initiative featured in Prof. John Palfrey's recently published '[Bibliotech](#)' about C21st libraries, and attracted interest from US and European library innovators engaged in the integration of libraries with makerspaces and 'MakerBox' development in the intervening period.

Looking ahead, we would warmly welcome the opportunity to consolidate the work we've undertaken to date with library authorities across the country and, in particular, to respond to the new interest in Common Libraries generated in the course of conducting our National Library Science Experiment as well as in supporting related events – although, we would propose to iterate our approach on the basis of lessons learned.

To that end, the learning from Phase II activities points toward the merits of:

1. Providing additional risk capital to encourage library authorities to explore new ways of working and, in particular, activities to support knowledge and skills sharing linked to community publishing;
2. Supporting a small number of local promotional campaigns to raise awareness of the Common Libraries message amongst existing as well as prospective library users, working in close conjunction with library authorities and other relevant stakeholders;
3. Offering in-depth support to facilitate targeted marketing and promotion as well as effective community engagement to underpin the bona fide co-production of new maker oriented facilities and services within and through libraries;
4. A capital programme to enable the co-location and integration of makerspaces within a network of libraries across England, which should call for local match-funding derived from community engagement and involvement to incentivise genuine co-production with creatives and other interested parties; and
5. Investment to support libraries in moving beyond Maker Instruction Sets and Maker Kits to prototype other approaches to multi-media community publishing in future.

Einstein is often quoted as having said: "If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research". Similarly, prototyping calls for continuous planning, agile implementation, candid evaluation and the delivery of improvements to iterate – in particular, where new concepts, ways of working and service development is concerned. Against a challenging backdrop, and at a time when guarantees of outcomes and impacts are sought to prioritise public spending commitments, we wish to thank Arts Council England and those library authorities who opted to take risks, try 'new things' and, of course, support us to render Phase II such a resounding success. We look forward to undertaking further work with them, as well as with library users, to 'prototype the library of the future – today'.

## **Next Steps for the Common Libraries Initiative**

Common Futures Ltd, which oversaw the programme of activities referred to herein as the Common Libraries initiative, is eager to extend its prototyping activities. In particular, we are proactively seeking to explore, develop and/or test new services underpinned by emergent technologies with library services across the UK. As such, we hope interested parties will [contact us](#) to discuss how they might become one of our trailblazers, and work with us over the coming months to develop a model of library provision that is fit for future purpose.

We also want libraries to become more self-sustaining so that they are capable of adapting and innovating in the face of declining revenue budgets. Accordingly, any project library service providers opt to pursue with us will build upon the work, to date, of the Common Libraries initiative, and seek to evolve library services through greater involvement of library users in service provision, as well as modernising the way in which local people interact with their local libraries. Crucially, we believe these changes will help mitigate against projected budget reductions by growing appeal amongst new audiences.

Ultimately, our aim is to establish Common Libraries as an independent social enterprise in which local authorities and other relevant bodies have a formal governance stake. That way, all concerned will benefit from closer working to nurture innovation, replication and agile iteration, and be well-placed to attract funds and social investment to further support the evolution of public libraries in future.

# APPENDIX 1

## Library Authority

Blackpool  
Bradford  
City of London  
Cornwall Library Service  
Doncaster  
Dudley  
Essex County Council  
Isle of Wight  
Kirklees, West Yorkshire  
London Boroughs of Croydon, Ealing, Hounslow & Harrow  
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham  
London Borough of Barnet  
London Borough of Lambeth  
London Borough of Lewisham  
London Borough of Sutton  
London Borough of Waltham Forest  
London Borough of Merton  
Luton  
Manchester Libraries  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
North Yorkshire  
Northamptonshire  
Oldham  
Rotherham  
Rutland  
Sheffield  
Somerset Libraries  
South Shields  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Suffolk  
Sunderland  
Wakefield  
Warrington (LiveWire)  
Warwickshire

## Library/Entity

Blackpool Central Library  
Denholme Community Library  
Barbican Library  
Not specified  
Central Library  
Stourbridge Library  
Mersea Library  
Lord Louis Library  
Not specified  
Not specified  
Not specified  
Garden Suburb Library  
Brixton Library  
Deptford Lounge  
Sutton Central Library  
Not specified  
Not specified  
Not specified  
Not specified  
City Library  
Jesmond Library  
Not specified  
Central Library  
Not specified  
Not specified  
Not specified  
Central Library  
Not specified  
Central Library  
Stockton Library  
Suffolk County Council  
Not specified  
Ossett Library  
Westbrook Library  
Henley Community Library