INFO 200 Blog 02: The Maker Community

September 15, 2019 (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/2019/09/15/info-200-blog-02-the-maker-community/)
Dani Musick (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/author/djmusick/)

The maker community is an exceptionally vibrant information community centered around DIY and STEAM. According to Make (http://make.co), makers most often engage in work with electronics, digital fabrication, craft and design, and the Internet of Things. Voight (https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/which-big-brands-are-courting-maker-movement-and-why-156315/) (2014) defined makers as "independent inventors, designers and tinkerers…. A convergence of computer hackers and traditional artisans…." (par. 2). She cited *Make Magazine* (https://makezine.com/) and Maker Faire (https://makerfaire.com/) (self-styled as the greatest show-and-tell on earth) as the primary modes of collaboration for a previously somewhat isolated community. Bajarin (https://time.com/104210/maker-faire-maker-movement/) (2014) estimated there are about 135 million US adults who are makers, let alone the number of children and adolescents who might also identify with that moniker. The maker movement (https://community.make.co/) allows all of these makers to share ideas, teach, learn, and access resources within the maker community.

The maker community is built on sharing—not only information, but also the products that result from information sharing. Durrance defined information communities as being "united by a common interest in building and increasing access to a set of dynamic, linked, and varying information sources" (as cited in Fisher & Bishop (https://infocom.hyperlib.sjsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Information_Services_Today_An_Introduction_-_3_Information_Communities.pdf), 2015, p. 22). Websites like Etsy (http://etsy.com), Instructables (http://instructables.com), Tested (http://tested.com), SkillShare (http://skillshare.com), and Inventables (http://inventables.com) are designed to increase access to information sources through forums, sales, patterns and models, how-to guides, videos, and other media. Maker Faire itself is a celebration of what makers made and how they made it, and exhibitors offer workshops to share the "how" of their creations (as an attendee, I have been recruited by many a maker to participate in their craft, be it Mandalorian (https://mandalorianmercs.org/) armor building, LED programming, or kombucha brewing, among others). Public libraries also increasingly include Makerspaces in their programs and services, and some commercial spaces are opening to increase access to maker resources.

Fisher and Bishop (https://infocom.hyperlib.sjsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Information_Services_Today_An_Introduction_-_3_Information_Communities.pdf) (2015) noted that information communities "[blur] the boundaries between information seekers, users, and providers" (p. 22). A member of the maker community might be all three of these at once: they can provide information from their own area of expertise while also seeking information regarding a different topic. Information communities emphasize "collaboration among diverse information providers," which is visible among makers who want to share their craft and learn others (p. 22). They also noted that, by definition, information communities form around users' information needs. The maker community exists to share information and resources among makers as well as to non-makers in hopes of making sales (e.g., artisans) or recruiting new makers.

Adam Savage (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhdbN-bRaSo) (2018) (of Mythbusters fame, and now a major figurehead of the maker movement) described sharing as one of the maker community's core tenets:

> I view [withholding information] as antithetical to making as a practice, as a discipline, and to being a member of any community. As a member of a community of humans, art is one of the key ways in which we converse about the world and what is going on around us. Human progress is made not simply because of how we make things but also because we share what we make and how we made it.

Makers seek information to learn, not to steal techniques. Where better to learn than from someone whose technique you admire? Fisher & Durrance (http://libaccess.sjlibrary.org/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412952583.n248) (2003) noted that information communities emphasize collaboration rather than minimize it (p. 4). There is a sense of shared responsibility and shared resources as the community depends on shared information, anticipating others' needs, and fostering connections within and beyond the community (p. 4). The maker community upholds this sense of duty to help other makers and the greater community by sharing information and resources.

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5 thoughts on "INFO 200 Blog 02: The Maker Community"

Hannah M (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/members/hannahm/) says:

September 15, 2019 at 1:33 pm (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/2019/09/15/info-200-blog-02-the-maker-community/#comment-7) Edit (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/wp-admin/comment.php?action=editcomment&c=7)

Hi Dani,

This is such an interesting topic to see how artists are transitioning their skill set to the digital age. And also how the digital age is helping to make even 'every day' people artists. What do you think about the makers sharing how-to videos? I would think this might be a controversial topic in the maker community since it would be teaching someone your trade which you could instead be making a profit off of. I assume that the rebuttal could be the concept of art being a communal experience which means being inclusive and having everyone participate. The idea of the online maker community makes me think about the informal information grounds mentioned in Fisher and Bishop's article where people gather to exchange ideas and information.

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Dani Musick (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/members/djmusick/) says:

September 15, 2019 at 7:21 pm (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/2019/09/15/info-200-blog-02-the-maker-community/#comment-8) Edit (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/wp-admin/comment.php?action=editcomment&c=8)

That's definitely a tricky area for makers. I think it's fair to share techniques by selling that information if making is someone's livelihood. Adam Savage has talked about that—he sold work bags, for example, but also sold the pattern for people who want to make their own or customize them. The pattern costs less than the premade bag itself. It would be nice if everything could be free, but obviously that's not realistic. I think his point is that makers shouldn't keep secrets about techniques, but it's completely fair to earn money for your skills and craft.

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Hannah M (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/members/hannahm/) says:

December 7, 2019 at 3:59 pm (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/2019/09/15/info-200-blog-02-the-maker-community/#comment-30) Edit (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/wp-

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Hi Dani,

I was thinking back to your info community while watching the show Making It on NBC. Have you seen it? It is a super cute show, hosted by Nick Offerman and Amy Poehler. It really highlights how the maker community has become such an important part of our society. I'm sure ten years ago no one would have guessed we would be having a competition show for makers.

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Dani Musick (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/members/djmusick/) says:
December 8, 2019 at 10:36 pm (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/2019/09/15/info-200-blog-02-the-maker-community/#comment-32) Edit (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/wp-admin/comment.php?action=editcomment&c=32)

I've seen one episode! (As a side note my fiance and I have been rewatching Parks and Rec.) I think it's really cool that handcrafting and making are becoming more and more celebrated with things like that show and Etsy.

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Michael Stephens (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/members/michael/) says:
September 19, 2019 at 2:29 pm (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/2019/09/15/info-200-blog-02-the-maker-community/#comment-9) Edit (https://ischoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/musick/wp-admin/comment.php?action=editcomment&c=9)

Good choice! You may want to look at a book by Chris Anderson called Makers. Might be a useful monograph to cite in the course of your assignments.

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