

Summer Activities and Projects

The Columbus Public Library's summer reading program is well underway, with all ages reading for prizes and events taking place throughout the week. This week, children (and the adults that brought them) enjoyed an interactive presentation by Dr. Todd Young on the Apollo 11 mission to the moon. Dr. Young is a professor of physics and astronomy at Wayne State College and the director of the Fred G. Dale Planetarium on the college's campus. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 this summer, Dr. Young demonstrated to the audience the stages of the rocket launch, flight to the moon, landing, takeoff, and flight back to earth. Using a LEGO replica, he showed us how each section was designed to detach when it was no longer needed for the flight.

Our Space Explorers (3-5th grade students) made space slime this week during their interactive, educational program with Platte County 4-H. Teens also had a great week making their own night lights and playing with fun gizmos & gadgets like Snap Circuits, Makey Makey, Turing Tumble, and more. Unaware that they are learning, these games teach users coding, circuitry, problem solving, sequencing, and other 21st century skills.

Although we are providing programs and implementing engaging, technology-focused activities, your library could do so much more in a building designed for the future, with flexible space built to adapt to the community's needs.

According to survey results collected via community roundtable discussions, online surveys, and a public Town Hall meeting, 72% of participants believe Columbus needs a new library, and 22% are currently undecided.

In order to develop a library that is truly a community project, we are seeking public input at each phase of development. As part of the first phase of project development for a new library building project, Tara Vasicek, City Administrator, and I have reached out to the public and gathered data to help us understand the public's thoughts regarding the 2017 library project that was not approved by voters, and what they believe a great library would include. Nearly 40% of those surveyed indicated they would support a library project that includes both an Arts Council component and Children's Museum. Only 5% indicated they would not support a project. The rest were divided between library only, library and Arts Council, or Library and Children's Museum.

Now, with gathered data, we are ready to begin developing a future-ready project program that reflects the wants and needs of Columbus. The program defines which components would be included in the project and the approximate space required for those components. Of the components listed on the survey, community rooms are the most desired feature to include in a library building project, as indicated by nearly 70% of participants. Makerspace followed with just over 60% of participants desiring this technology-filled collaborative space for creativity and innovation. A Children's Museum (59%), Arts Council space (57%), shared traveling exhibit space (53%), and STEAM components (56%) all follow close behind.

Last month architects from Alley Poyner Macchietto facilitated a public discussion and reviewed survey results to aid them in the development of multiple program options for the project. When program options are finalized, we will solicit public feedback to determine which program would be most valued by citizens of Columbus.

The next step in project development will be to evaluate the best location for the project, which includes rough design and cost estimates. 49% of survey participants stressed the most important factor to consider regarding location was accessibility to the public and parking, so parking will certainly be considered during site evaluations.