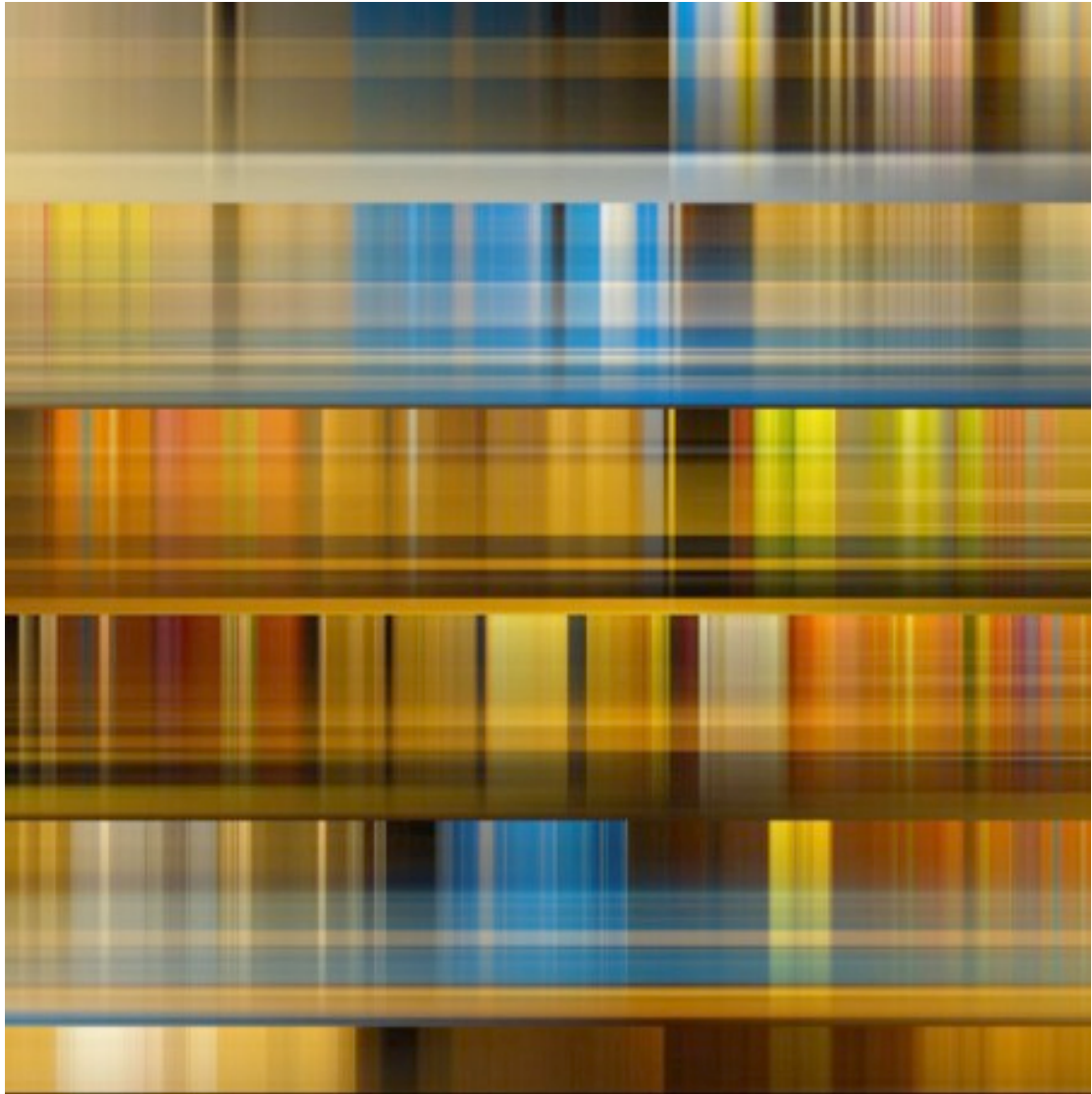


common**LIBRARIES**



Project Report

2014



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

About Us

[Common Futures](#) is a socially conscious business working with the public, private and third sectors to explore and kick at the boundaries of the community ownership landscape. We support organisations to generate income and deliver social impact by developing and managing digital capital; engaging with digital enterprise; and applying open source business models and cooperative principles to harness local knowledge and know-how.

We've worked extensively with the library sector over the past few years:-

- [Community Libraries: Learning from Experience](#) – directing Locality's contribution to primary research into community involvement in library asset management and service delivery, working with Arts Council England, DCMS, DCLG, DEFRA and the LGA.
- [St Botolph's Waiting Room](#) – narrating a Carnegie UK Trust sponsored pilot to establish a library-hack-maker space with the Creative Coop, Colchester School of Art and Essex Libraries.
- [Enabling Enterprise in Libraries](#) - directing Locality's contribution to a research project funded by Arts Council England to explore existing good practice as well as the future potential for income generation within a library context.
- **Income Generation for Public Libraries: A Practical Guide for Library Service Commissioners and Providers in England** (forthcoming – July 2014) – directing the development of a technical guidance note prepared by Locality and funded by Arts Council England to accompany earlier research about Enabling Enterprise in Libraries.
- [Assessing the Rural Impacts of Changes to Library Services](#) (forthcoming) – overseeing Locality's contribution to a DEFRA funded action research and learning project led by OPM.
- [The Future High Street: Perspectives on Living, Learning and Livelihoods in our Communities](#) – providing expert input to the work of the Future Spaces Foundation.

If you'd like to find out more about our work, please visit: <http://www.commonfutures.eu/>

Introduction

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete – Buckminster Fuller.

We believe there is an urgent and pressing need to evolve libraries so that they may serve as bastions of a 21st century knowledge commons - functioning as trusted and impartial platforms for the production, exchange and consumption of knowledge and know-how - in both tangible locations and virtual spaces. We are therefore using our expertise in asset development, design, technology, community engagement and social enterprise to work closely with library service users and providers to that end. Our ultimate aim is to empower people to co-design and deliver new library services in our increasingly open source society, such that they are responsive to technological advancements and fast-changing local needs, as well as positioned to make the most of emergent socio-economic opportunities. We're eager to help prototype most things in keeping with a public library ethos - from community publishing platforms to open data access and re-mixing points and, even, [libraries without shelves and walls](#). The explicit intention, then, is to revitalise the public library ethos and render library services more relevant, useful and sustainable in their appeal to and involvement of broad-ranging audiences in our increasingly digital age.

The [Common Libraries](#) initiative flows from the drivers of change in UK library services, [attempts](#) in the United States to reconfigure libraries as spaces to facilitate Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) 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 to engage a wider community of interest in Spring 2014, we were [encouraged](#) to 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. Helpfully, this reads across to the efforts of those who are re-imagining libraries as contemporary [platforms](#) or, else, seeking to enhance or evolve them through automated [book share services](#) and [Personal Portable Library Networks \(PPLNs\)](#) – such that we have already begun to iterate our starting point.

We are, perhaps uniquely, persuaded that there could also be merit in exploring the potential for elements of libraries (specifically, library staff and users) to form [Distributed Autonomous Organisations \(DAOs\)](#) in future – reflecting upon the pioneering work of the [Ethereum Project](#) and, related to that, [Eris, by Project Douglas](#). Early thinking, in this regard, concerns the potential to safeguard our social knowledge economy through the evolution of DAOs for the purposes of what we've begun to term #humansearch – an [ethical and empathic](#) stand, if you will, in the face of corporate search dominance and big data proponents. But, they could be designed in such a way as to also integrate with PPLN nodes and 'user-librarians' in future.

We have sought from the outset to enable income generation by ['library enterprises'](#). In this important respect, we recognise the challenges facing local authorities and other library service providers who might wish to experiment with elements of Common Libraries, and acknowledge the place of cooperativism, community enterprise and social investment in facilitating and augmenting our otherwise open-by-default approach. As such, Common Libraries are liable to remain deeply rooted in the notion and actuality of dynamic and aspirational communities - exploring, engaging and growing with the unfolding 21st century in a playful and creative manner to contribute to the [open knowledge](#) project. However, they are also grounded in a recognition that we need to radically reappraise our approach to financing library service delivery and transformation, if libraries are to endure integral to our increasingly digital and community-led operating environment.

Project Rationale

Our team benefits from extensive experience working with the public and third sectors as well as with creative industry professionals. Over the past five years, we have contributed to [relevant research](#) for national bodies and advised local government. We've also helped establish a test-bed for library service transformation at the [Waiting Room](#), working in partnership with [Essex Libraries](#) and supported by the [Carnegie UK Trust](#), and have supported or managed community-led library services at the local level. The learning amassed from this first project will, nonetheless, be of particular interest if you're a library service commissioner or provider interested in forging links with [hackers and makers](#) in your local area; considering the introduction of a hack and/or makerspace in your library building; or want to explore how to develop an [integrated](#) library-hack-makerspace - and, all the more, if you share our belief that libraries re-imagined as community publishing platforms might go some way towards nurturing a more relevant, vibrant and sustainable model for library services and related social enterprises in future.

The first research and prototyping project undertaken to establish [Common Libraries](#) built upon the learning amassed by Chattanooga Public Library in the course of establishing [the 4th Floor](#) and, in particular, the work of the community responsible for the [Waiting Room](#) in St Botolph's, Colchester. It was designed to inform and work with enterprising organisations to put in place measures to begin prototyping the library of the future, today – where the library of the future is taken to mean an institution that places *equal* emphasis upon knowledge production, exchange and consumption.

The Waiting Room is itself founded upon an innovative '[borrow/barter/buy/bespoke](#)' approach to business integration for [library-hack-makerspaces](#). This is intended to help maintain the ethos of a public library, where its function to 'facilitate access to all' is concerned, at the same time as introducing an income generation or 'library enterprise' dimension to operations. We sought to research and took steps to replicate/iterate elements of the Waiting Room initiative elsewhere over a period of three months and, with that, began to explore the potential to establish an income generating library-hack-makerspace network with a grant from Arts Council England.



The Waiting Room, St Botolph's – Colchester

We tested the potential to replicate/iterate the model underpinning the Waiting Room with:-

- 1) **Fresh Horizons, Huddersfield** – a community enterprise operating a library in Deighton on contract to Kirklees Council, the Yorkshire Sheet Music Library and a community cinema;
- 2) **Fast Fibre Hubs, Caterham** – a fibre installation cooperative with close ties to Tandridge District Council, the Caterham Community Partnership, CR3 Forum (a Neighbourhood Planning front-runner), and Soper Hall Community Centre – delivering community-led activities to grow creative industries activity in the area linked to digital asset and enterprise development; and
- 3) **Eco Communities** – a social enterprise operating 3 community libraries in partnership with the London Borough of Lewisham, alongside its established IT recycling and training activities.

Ultimately, we aimed to better understand the potential for library-hack-makerspaces to enhance the resilience and sustainability of libraries through the provision of integrated and income generating support for creative businesses via a [standardised](#) approach to knowledge production, capture and exchange, and we were successful in:

- drawing partners' attention to the potential for hacking and making to contribute to the evolution of library services;
- engaging them in the co-design of a common process for prototyping the development of integrated library-hack-makerspaces; and
- assisting them in the preparation of related action plans to guide practical next steps.

EXPLORE PHASE

Our library-hack-makerspace project built upon learning from two related initiatives:-

- 1) [St Botolph's Waiting Room \(UK\)](#) – an *integrated* library-hack-makerspace operating in Colchester since Summer 2013, and *affiliated* to Essex Libraries; and
- 2) [The 4th Floor, Chattanooga Public Library \(United States\)](#) – a hack-makerspace *co-located* with Chattanooga Public Library in Tennessee since Autumn 2012.

Whilst both remain at a relatively early stage in their development, they represent the best-known library-hack-makerspaces operating in the UK and US at present.

The former is an entrepreneurial community-led library-hack-makerspace, operating from a formerly derelict building on a 'shoe-string' budget and temporary basis. It is the product of diverse, well-networked and proactive users driving grass-root attempts to *integrate* knowledge production, exchange and consumption. Their aim is to breathe creative life into a relatively quiet area in the East of England that is in need of regeneration and harness a community around hacking and, in particular, making whilst also nurturing related start-ups.

The latter, by contrast, is a well-resourced and publicly managed library-hack-makerspace in the United States. It is co-located with a traditional public library and benefits from a staff team with an entrepreneurial mind-set and considerable digital prowess. It also has a clear aim to develop digital skills amongst young people that reads across to the gigabit broadband infrastructure from which Chattanooga benefits.

There are, then, very different business and community engagement/involvement logics at work in both cases, and although we'd anticipated a better fit between the 4th Floor and most publicly managed lending libraries in England at the outset (in addition to seeking synergies between the Waiting Room and the scope to develop community-led 'library enterprises'), it is important to note:-

- 1) The very different funding environment for public libraries in the US as compared with England - rendering questionable the extent to which straightforward replication attempts are liable to succeed (save in major urban libraries managed by the public sector) unless and until concerted efforts to explore new ways in which to raise investment and support innovation are actioned – for example, through dedicated 'library investment and innovation' vehicles.

- 2) The contrasting ethos and skills-set amongst public sector library commissioners and providers in England - their ability and willingness to reach out and act entrepreneurially as well as to engage enthusiastically with new technologies and the STEAM agenda.
- 3) The growing number of community-led library providers in England - with implications for their capacity as well as their appetite and aptitude to drive STEAM-related innovation without appropriate support and investment.
- 4) The rural impacts of changes to library services in recent years, calling for bespoke input in relation to the development of rural hacking/making facilities or services (for example, fresh thinking linked to innovation in mobile library services and/or alternative routes to broadband provision).
- 5) The concerns that are liable to surround an emphasis upon the development of new services underpinned by or related to 'library enterprises' amongst some library service commissioners, providers and users.

The challenges attaching to the establishment of library-hack-makerspaces are not, then, inconsiderable. However, recent research undertaken by Locality and OPM, working with library leaders, will recommend ways in which to address some of these issues. Moreover, our own activities point toward a practical way forward which, we believe, takes into account the importance of maintaining and, even, revitalising the library ethos through the prototyping of library-hack-makerspaces with local authorities and communities more broadly.

Business Model Research

We sought from the outset to enable income generation by 'library enterprises' in the course of developing the Common Libraries initiative. Here, we provide an overview of the business model underpinning the Waiting Room, which we sought to replicate/iterate working with our project partners, because the 4th Floor benefits from significant public funds and has been highly successful in its partnering arrangements to *co-locate* hacking/making activities alongside the more traditional offer of the Chattanooga Public Library. We aimed, instead, to lay the foundations for an *integrated* library-hack-makerspace network underpinned by 'library enterprises', acknowledging that the Common Libraries initiative is situated against a backdrop of austerity in the UK.

The Waiting Room's business model comprises a number of related elements with the potential for income generation:

- 1) **space for community hire** – the venue is offered at different rates, including [for free](#) in many instances, to deliver particular outcomes and generate income (albeit, indirectly, at times). Notably, free 'hire' includes Maker Wednesdays, when individual creatives are encouraged to lead workshops (free of charge) and, in effect, barter their knowledge and know-how on a 'loss leader' basis – i.e. to promote their skills and any MakerKits / commissions they might wish to offer for sale (see: below);
- 2) **bar/café/restaurant** – the project has tested a number of [different approaches](#), including profit-share arrangements, rented access and joint venturing, to complement particular activities, share responsibilities for staffing the building during the day, and directly support [young entrepreneurs](#) starting out.
- 3) **membership based hack/maker workshop facilities** – the project has recently introduced [low-cost resident and flexible membership opportunities](#), drawing upon learning from established hack/makerspaces, for example the [London Hackspace](#).
- 4) **joint venturing with creative start-ups** – the project has nurtured start-ups that range from an [arts/craft gallery](#) to a [micro social history archive](#) as well as a [photography business](#), in addition to its close working relationship with those responsible for developing its hack/maker workshop scheme, offering discounted space hire/profit-share arrangements as well as practical support for mutual benefit.
- 5) **micro library enterprise development with creative users** - we have outlined the Waiting Room's 'borrow/barter/buy/bespoke' approach [elsewhere](#), and there is further information concerning [MakerBoxes and MakerKits](#) in the How-To Resources developed integral to this project.



The business model is summarised below in diagrammatic form to highlight those free, negotiable, chargeable and consumer-oriented elements. Crucially, however, each is highly dependent upon:

- (a) the building in and of itself (i.e. the spaces of which it is comprised);
- (b) the strength of the user community it continues to develop and service;
- (c) the provision of appropriate tools/facilities at an affordable / competitive rate where its hacking/making user community is concerned;
- (d) the cultivation and close working with a core group of creatives for joint venturing purposes; and
- (e) a commitment to driving attendance and contributions to [Maker Wednesdays](#) and, with that, identification and support for creatives who are able and willing to develop MakerBoxes and MakerKits and/or content to negotiate a profit-share arrangement in relation to commissions/sales.

NB: without MakerBoxes/MakerKits, it could be argued that the 'enterprise' component of the project ought not to be referred to as a 'library enterprise' since the model points in effect to [other adjacent routes](#) to income generation. However, it is in the *integrated* approach to support for borrowing (knowledge and know-how), bartering (knowledge, know-how and skilled input), buying (instructions and 'ingredients') and bespoke (product/service) ordering - underpinned by a combination of open-by-default, mutual benefit and community enterprise principles - that the project can be deemed to represent a bona fide 'library enterprise' when viewed as a whole. It is, then, modelled upon a combination of other open source hardware/software enterprises - as per [Open Desk](#) - and informed by the thinking that underpins [Creative Commons](#) and [Peer Production licensing](#).

Looking Ahead

Only time will tell whether there is real and/or significant enterprise potential harboured in the development and sale of MakerKits across a network of library-hack-makerspaces, because the Waiting Room's own give-get library remains nascent at the time of writing, and our work in the course of this project only permitted us to lay the foundations for a prototype network in practice. However, early indications point towards the merits of developing a number of related income streams, as in the case of the Waiting Room, from the point of view of developing a sustainable library enterprise.

Otherwise, we were [encouraged](#) to explore the potential for Common Libraries to draw upon the [peer-to-peer](#) and [sharing economy](#) movement in future. This fits well with the Waiting Room's emphasis upon sharing knowledge and know-how. We are, nonetheless, conscious of the not inconsiderable [challenges](#) implied by a business model which must simultaneously

scale demand and supply, in addition to establishing innovative physical and virtual library platforms if it is to underpin the production, exchange and consumption of knowledge and know-how through integrated library-hack-makerspaces. Others still are re-imagining libraries as contemporary [platforms](#) or, else, seeking to enhance or evolve them in a more 'obvious' manner from the point of view of the library 'brand' – principally, through automated [book share services](#) and [personal portable library networks \(PPLNs\)](#). Common Libraries could, then, iterate our prototype business model to also incorporate optional value add services in relation to e-book sharing (where legitimate).

There could also be merit in exploring the potential for elements of libraries (specifically, library staff and users) to form [Distributed Autonomous Organisations \(DAOs\)](#) in future in relation to what we've begun to term #humansearch. Notionally, such DAOs could be designed to integrate with PPLN nodes to safeguard the open and free exchange of knowledge and know-how, whilst deriving micro-payments for value add or 'personal knowledge assistance' - a step beyond, for example, [Ask NYPL](#) (which [answered a staggering 3.5m questions in 2013](#)) or, else, engineered through deployment of the blockchain to re-introduce a trust device to established online search engines. Looking ahead, however, further prototyping work is required to explore such options in greater depth.

What can you do at our Hack/Maker/Library Space?

WAITING ROOM
St Botolphs is a new community group named after the Patron Saint of an area in Colchester town centre. The group is made up of local residents, retailers and local organisations working together to improve their neighbourhood.

The Waiting Room is the group's first project kick started by group members Colchester School of Art and the Creative Coop. The aim is to build a Hack/Maker/Library Space in a disused bus station waiting room to provide open access to creative skills while revitalising the area and re-establishing a creative, cultural identity.

WWW.ST-BOTOLPHS.ORG

TRAIT RESPONE
Commission a one-off product or request a personal one-to-one lesson

BUY
Purchase locally crafted products, off the shelf or in DIY kit form

BARTER
Attend free knowledge sharing events and access maker tools during our workshop open days

BORROW
Access specialist Maker books, instruction kits and other learning resources

SOCIALISE
Meet like minded people and form new relationships

NURTURE & INCUBATE
Develop new skills or a career in Making as an resident business or member of our workshop facilities

PERFORM & PRESENT
Enjoy opportunities to showcase your creativity to others

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & RE-ESTABLISHING A CREATIVE, CULTURAL IDENTITY

A flavour of what those activities currently look like in reality...

MAKER WEDNESDAYS Weekly knowledge exchange events for local people to share or learn a craft and have free access to the workshop facilities. Alex Davis alev@creative.coop	MAKER LIBRARY A small portable trailer containing shelves of books, locally made tools, kits and other resources to reference and borrow. Hannah Stanger hannah@stbotolphs.org	HAZEL GALLERY SHOP An incubated local business selling products made by local Makers. Lucy Hook-Child lucy@hazegallery.co.uk	YOUTH CLUB Once a week, the Waiting Room and its facilities are taken over by young people. Andy Wharmill andy@stbotolphs.org
MAKER DIRECTORY An online directory of local Makers, Artists and Hackers. Alex Davis alev@creative.coop	HACK/MAKER WORKSHOP A shared workshop for people interested in developing maker skills, hobbies and careers. Alex Davis alev@creative.coop	KITCHEN An incubated restaurant business run by an local upward-leaning chef serving British Tastes and pop-up evening meals. Charlie Stocker charlie@stbotolphs.org	VOICES OF THE QUARTER A social history project to capture our local creative and cultural heritage. Bethor Briggs Miller hubs@voq.org.uk
Colchester School of Art	Colchester Institute	Colchester Arts Council	Colchester 100
Colchester	Colchester	Colchester	Colchester

Develop & Test Phases

HOW-TO RESOURCES

We developed the following resources to help interested parties build rich, vibrant library-hack-makerspaces, drawing upon the lessons learned from establishing the Waiting Room:

1. **What is a Library-Hack-Makerspace?** – affiliation, co-location and integration models
2. **Understanding the Landscape** – getting to know the area that you operate in, its hacking and making “scene”
3. **Mapping and Categorising Hackers and Makers** – building a directory of local hackers and makers
4. **Planning your Library-Hack-Makerspace** – organising the space you have available to best effect
5. **Programming your first Event** – programming, scheduling and promotion
6. **Building Local Partnerships with Groups, Sponsors and Retailers** – working with existing groups, local retailers and sponsors to make your events a success
7. **Generating an Income from your Library-Hack-Makerspace** – business models, membership bodies, joint ventures and hack-maker boxes
8. **Developing your Library** – creating and costing hack-maker boxes

The How-to Resources are provided in full via the [Common Libraries](#) website.

MEETINGS, VISITS & PROTOTYPES

We convened a virtual inception meeting to introduce project partners to one another - in particular, to ensure all concerned had an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of representatives of the 4th Floor and Waiting Room at the outset. We then visited our 3 prototypes to solicit background information about the organisations and their aspirations in seeking to establish library-hack-makerspaces, as well as to outline our proposed approach to replication, and agree a timetable for the completion of bespoke action plans. We also arranged visits to both the Waiting Room in Colchester and the [London Hackspace](#). An introduction to each prototype is available via the [Common Libraries](#) website.

Our prototypes were subsequently encouraged to plan forward activities in keeping with the process outlined in the How-To Resources developed for the project, and whilst we are unable to guarantee what further steps will be taken in practice, we were nonetheless encouraged by local enthusiasm to progress activities at the end of March 2014. However, they are based in different locations and serve very different communities. Although the process to which we adhered and accompanying how-to resources worked well in each instance, then, practical progress will be subject to local ambitions, capacity and skill-sets, distinctive starting points, greater or lesser reliance upon the local authorities with whom project partners work, as well as community engagement going forward.

Key Findings

It will be over the weeks and months ahead that replication and iteration plans are implemented by our prototypes such that we are better able to draw firm conclusions in keeping with our stated ambitions and/or begin to establish any emergent network in earnest.

In the interim, our project resulted in the following key findings:

Common Libraries: there is 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. Already, we have entered into encouraging discussions with academics, innovation agencies, library leaders and sharing economy proponents in the UK, US, EU, South Africa and Australia.

Awareness & 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. Without this, the combination of challenges facing public sector library service commissioners, as well as constraints affecting community-led library providers, is liable to introduce a significant barrier to engagement elsewhere in future.

User Need / Demand & Co-Production Value: we encountered a greater degree of comfort amongst library authorities and more immediate community interest in relation to traditional *making* as compared with *hacking*. We encountered a greater degree of interest amongst our project partners in *hacking* as compared with *making*. There is real value, then, in the process outlined in those [how-to resources](#) developed integral to the project, because they point 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 – in particular, where the development of library enterprises is concerned.

Business Models & ‘Library Enterprises’: our project partners expressed interest in deploying the hackspace [membership model](#) to which we introduced them, as well as [MakerKit development and sale](#), from the point of view of engaging with the Waiting Room’s income generation efforts. Whilst they proved less inclined to engage in Joint Venturing with users, we believe this is due, in part, to the real and/or perceived constraints of the buildings from which they (aim to) operate as compared with the Waiting Room. It is too early to tell whether there is real and/or significant enterprise potential harboured in the development and sale of MakerKits across a network of library-hack-makerspaces, such that further work with our prototypes and/or an alternative approach to practical market testing is recommended. However, early indications point towards the merits of developing a number of related income streams, as in the case of the Waiting Room, from the point of view of sustainability.

Knowledge, Skills, Capacity & Entrepreneurship: there are opportunities and challenges surrounding the knowledge, skills, capacity and entrepreneurship inherent in organisations that might wish to establish Common Libraries. We also concluded that innovation cannot flow or be followed-through in the current climate without encouragement and investment in the capacity to innovate if this is to become a more mainstream endeavour in future. Helpfully, we were in a position to offer direct support and a modest incentive to engage in knowledge and skills exchange visits as well as to innovate integral to this project.

Innovation: we are persuaded that there could be merit in exploring the potential for [elements](#) of libraries (specifically, library staff and users) to form [Distributed Autonomous Organisations](#) that are capable of generating income from micro-payments in future. Some technical aspects of the work needed to take this forward are already underway, partly, as a result of our engaging a wider community of interest over recent months. However, they will need to be supported if they are to be rendered of direct relevance and interest to library staff and users. We also think it worthwhile investigating the scope for [book share services](#) and [personal portable library networks \(PPLNs\)](#) to play a part in growing and augmenting more traditional library services concerned with access to information. But, one again, further work to assess the income generation potential of these micro-payment and peer-to-peer services is needed before their development can be explored in earnest.