

A Complete Guide to Creative Technology Spaces in Academic Libraries: Media Labs, Makerspaces, and More, Emily

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and Oscar K. Keyes, ALA Editions, 2025. 224 pp. Softcover, \$69.99. 9798892553117.



A Complete Guide to Creative Technology Spaces in Academic Libraries offers a practical and accessible resource for academic libraries developing or sustaining makerspaces, media labs, and other creative technology environments. Drawing on the authors' professional experience, the book addresses the organizational, spatial, and service-related challenges that accompany these initiatives, positioning itself squarely as a guide for practitioners rather than a theoretical intervention.

The authors define creative technology spaces broadly as “any space in a library that encourages patrons to create something beyond the traditional research paper” (xi). This inclusive framing allows the book to speak to a wide range of institutional contexts, from libraries with established media labs to those exploring smaller-scale or emerging services. Rather than privileging high-cost technologies or trend-driven models, the authors emphasize adaptability, scalability, and alignment with local goals, reinforcing the idea that creative technology work can build on existing library infrastructure and expertise.

The volume is organized around the practical stages of planning, implementing, and sustaining creative technology spaces. Early chapters focus on assessing readiness and articulating purpose, with particular attention on institutional context. In Chapter 1, “Taking Stock,” the authors observe that creative technology initiatives typically emerge either through administrative direction or staff-driven advocacy, describing these as “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches, respectively (3). This distinction grounds the discussion in familiar organizational dynamics and underscores the importance of understanding internal decision-making structures before expanding services.

Subsequent chapters focus on operational considerations, including space design, equipment selection, staffing, programming, and policy development. Rather than offering prescriptive solutions, the authors highlight trade-offs shaped by budget, labor capacity, and user demand. Questions of access—who may use creative technology spaces and under what conditions—are treated as locally determined policy decisions, influenced by staffing levels, training requirements, and institutional mission. While the book acknowledges that some libraries extend access beyond enrolled students, it provides limited guidance on serving external patrons, leaving issues such as liability, scheduling, and cost recovery largely unexamined.

Sustainability is a recurring theme throughout the text and represents one of the book's strongest contributions. The authors address ongoing funding needs, equipment maintenance and replacement, and the labor required to keep creative technology services functional over time. Staffing receives sustained attention, particularly the challenges of training, documentation, and reliance on student employees. By emphasizing realistic service models and clear workflows, the book encourages libraries to plan for long-term upkeep rather than short-term launches.

Partnerships are also positioned as central to the success of creative technology spaces. The authors encourage collaboration with academic departments, IT units, and teaching and

learning centers to align services with curricular and institutional priorities. Although this discussion focuses primarily on internal campus relationships, it reinforces the role of the library as a collaborative partner rather than a standalone service provider. Guidance on encouraging curricular integration emphasizes alignment with existing learning outcomes and assignments, suggesting that faculty adoption follows from demonstrated relevance rather than explicit persuasion strategies.

Challenges and limitations surface implicitly throughout the book rather than as a formal “lessons learned” section. Issues such as underestimating labor demands, managing high user expectations, and preventing service creep emerge through recommendations for clearer policies and sustainable workflows. This approach keeps the focus on solutions, although readers seeking detailed case studies of failed or restructured makerspaces may find the treatment understated.

The book’s clear organization, direct writing style, and use of examples and checklists enhance its usability as a reference tool. While it does not engage deeply with theoretical or critical perspectives on technology and learning, its primary value lies in supporting effective planning, management, and assessment of creative technology services within academic libraries.

Overall, *A Complete Guide to Creative Technology Spaces in Academic Libraries* is a useful addition to the professional literature on academic library services. Its emphasis on organizational context, sustainability, and day-to-day decision-making makes it particularly relevant for librarians and administrators responsible for developing or managing creative technology spaces. As a pragmatic and adaptable guide, it offers a realistic roadmap for libraries seeking to integrate creative production into their services in a deliberate and manageable way. — Michelle Mussuto, Head of Acquisitions, Collection Management, and Evaluation Unit, California State University, Chico