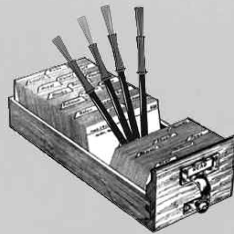


**PROGRAM  
GUIDE**

# *The Artist's Library*

**A FIELD GUIDE**

**FROM THE LIBRARY AS INCUBATOR PROJECT**



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**COFFEE HOUSE PRESS  
MINNEAPOLIS  
2014**

**T**HANK YOU for downloading the program guide for *The Artist's Library: A Field Guide* (Coffee House Press, 2014). The authors hope that library staff will use the book as a programming companion. All of the exercise and program ideas are meant to be reused, revised, or replicated in other communities.

Each section of this guide corresponds loosely to the chapters in *The Artist's Library*:

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For even more ideas and inspiration, we encourage you to take a look at our websites, [libraryasincubatorproject.org](http://libraryasincubatorproject.org) and [booktoartclub.org](http://booktoartclub.org), and check us out on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Tumblr.

## *Programs to Help Users Get Creative in the Library*

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 29–56)



### **CAPTURING THE UNEXPECTED**

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 33–37)

JAMIE POWELL SHEPARD uses libraries as subjects in her fine art photography. Your library doesn't need to be a shining architectural treasure to inspire this type of work. Here are some examples of programs that leverage the idea of "library as subject":

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- A photography contest based in or outside of the library.

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  - An afternoon of "plein air" painting, wherein artists set up easels and capture outdoor subjects.

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  - A creative writing project that encourages patrons to focus on the library as the setting of their stories. You can use this exercise (found on page 37) as an opening writing prompt:

*Find a bidden corner in your home library. Take a few moments to describe what you can see, hear, feel, and smell from where you are sitting. Which titles can you see in the stacks? What is the light like? What sorts of noises and activity can you perceive? The library is alive, and you are listening to its heartbeat. Record your ideas in a notebook.*

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### **PLAYING WITH THE NOTION OF THE "LIBRARY"**

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 38–42)

DOREEN KENNEDY'S WORK explores the physical collections of libraries to tell and reveal stories about the dozens, even hundreds of people

who check out these materials over time. Invite library patrons to explore the collections as a whole and as an intricate series of working parts.

This type of program can be billed as a creative exploration, or a creative wandering through the library. Try using some of the exercises from “Playing with the Notion of the ‘Library’” as prompts to get your group started:

- 
- *Pick out a book from a shelf in your library. It could be one you’ve read and know well, or one you’ve never seen before but like the look of. Look at its table of contents. Read the introduction and maybe a page or two from the first chapter to familiarize yourself with its subject matter. Speculate for a moment on where this book has been before you held it in your hands. Who might have checked it out over the course of its life in this library? Draw your idea of the book’s journey in a notebook.*
  - *Wander through a genre section of your library (e.g., romance, westerns, science fiction, mystery). Let the condition of the books tell a story about the books in this section. What do a book’s spine, corners, and repairs tell you about the pages inside? See what totally inconclusive, nonscientific conclusions you can draw about this section based strictly on what you can see as you walk along. Jot down your ideas. Later, see if you can write a few paragraphs in the style of a travel guide to that section (pointing out “landmarks” and “undiscovered treasures”).*
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**TIP:** Spring for some basic composition notebooks to give your program attendees to take home with them. This can be the start of a writing journal and will encourage people to continue writing and exploring after the formal library program ends.

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## EXAMINING THE LIVING, BREATHING LIBRARY (THE ARTIST’S LIBRARY, PAGES 43–50)

IN THIS SECTION of *The Artist’s Library*, we examined the work of library artist-in-residence Chris Gaul, who takes everyday objects in the library and changes them slightly to provide a series of art “happenings” around the space.

The exercises outlined in this section can be presented by the library as another series of “creative explorations” for your users.

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□ *Play with everyday objects in your library. Grab a stack of books, a golf pencil or two (find them next to the computer catalog), a magazine, and other easily moveable items. Hole up in a study room or at a worktable and arrange your objects in front of you. What are their relationships to one another? If these objects were alive, what would they worry about? Be excited about? What secrets would they hold? What do their nights look like? How do they interact with each other when the library is closed*

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□ *Think about how you go about finding information, whether it is a new novel to read, a field guide for local birds, or a medical study. Make a list of all the different ways you find information. Do you do research on your own? Ask friends for recommendations? Ask a librarian? Use an app on your phone or computer? How would you reorganize your home library to facilitate your style of title discovery? Jot down your ideas for ways to reorganize your own collections of information.*

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**TIP:** Offer readers in your community the opportunity to make book recommendations to other library patrons. Set up an interactive book display where users can add their own recommended titles, or use social media to collect and share book recommendations. Try tying this to something like National Book Week or World Read Aloud Day.

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**LIBRARIES AND YOU**  
**(THE ARTIST’S LIBRARY, PAGES 51–56)**

**P**OET JOSEPH MILLS’S wonderful poem “If Librarians Were Honest” goes straight to the heart of why so many people—artists and nonartists alike—find such power in libraries. Help make your library accessible for all users—including artists, writers, and performers—by offering a tour that individuals or groups can book with you or another staff member.

Many libraries do this already, either for classes or on an as-needed basis with new patrons. Try marketing this service directly to artists and other creative folks. Start off by talking with your local art or community center. Invite instructors to come to the library for a tour, and extend the invitation to their students as well.

# *Help Artists Engage Creatively with Library Materials*

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 57–82)



CHAPTER 2 of *The Artist's Library* highlights several artists whose work is directly inspired by library materials—straight from the shelf or from a digital collection. Admittedly, creative inspiration is a lofty goal for attendees of a library program—there's no guarantee when it will strike, or what will inspire the spark of invention and inspiration. But there are ways to facilitate a creative exploration of a library so that artists and other creative types dig in to your library's collections and—ideally—come back for more.

The following are exercises you can offer to prompt your program attendees to engage with your collections. You can do these with a range of ages and group types (for example, a young adult writing group or a group of local artists who are interested in exploring the library).

- 
- Go to a fiction section of the library that you don't normally browse (e.g., mysteries, westerns, romance, young adult fiction) and pick out a book that has a particularly appealing cover to you. Turn to the first, second, or third chapter in the book and write down the first sentence. Replace the book (or check it out!) and continue the story in your own words from that first sentence.
- 
- Pick a visually stimulating area of the nonfiction section (field guides to flora and fauna, cookbooks and baking books, architecture books, and so forth). Use tracing paper or regular notebook paper and trace images that you like or appeal to you in some way. Fill up your page with black-and-white tracings, and color them in or leave them as is.
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**TIP:** Does your library host digital image collections? A creative exploration program is a really neat way to showcase these images! On a projector screen, show a particularly interesting image and have your program attendees spend five minutes writing jotting down their thoughts about it. Do this with two to three images from the same collection (historical photos are great for this). Afterwards, show attendees how to access the library’s digital collections so that they can explore and replicate the exercise on their own.

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# *Help Users Doing Creative Project Research*

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 83–122)



**N**EW LITERARY AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS, social and scientific commentary, and even homages and conversations with other works are the foundation of many artworks. Because these creative dialogues demand accurate knowledge of sources and references in order to be effective metaphors, library research is often a key factor in their success. Your library can be an important resource for artists, performers, and writers in your area.

Consider the following ways to support the research phase of creative work:

- 
- Make digital collections accessible. Digital collections can be tricky to promote. There's no physical object to hand to a patron, and database links lack the serendipity factor of browsing the stacks for one title and being captivated by others. Consider highlighting beautiful objects, articles, or ephemera with images and a brief overview, either on the library website, social media, or with a display. Even a poster of an image or a historical document can spark interest in a database that would otherwise be just one more link on the library's website. Creating how-to guides for especially inspiring databases or digital collections can also be a huge boon for artists.
- 
- Bring the archives front and center. Some of the most compelling items in library collections are kept behind the desk. Consider how you can bring these items into the public space without compromising their

integrity. Display cases normally used for art shows can also be used to showcase historical volumes, ephemera, and other physical objects, and draw attention to the library's collection. Prominent signage that notes further holdings and explains how interested folks can make an appointment to view them up close are also great ways to promote deeper service opportunities.

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- Let collaborative research take root. Develop relationships with local artists and contribute continuously to their creative process by collaborating with them at the research phase. Almost all library reference services include in-depth reference interviews (especially at academic libraries, where service is designed to support long-running research projects). Reference librarians are a key resource, and their skills at finding high-quality information can be crucial at the research stage of an artistic project, whether the topic is a time period or style, a historic event, a social justice issue, or a scientific breakthrough. Consider advertising these skills—allow artists to sign up for one-on-one consultations with reference librarians and see what develops. Even a one-page report listing books, articles, magazines, and digital collections for a patron to explore can open up worlds of possibility, and foster real trust and collaboration between the library and the arts community.

## Encourage “Making” and Hands-On Exploration in the Library

(THE ARTIST’S LIBRARY, PAGES 123–134)



CHANCES ARE you’ve seen a lot of buzz about makerspaces and maker programs and their increasing presence in libraries around the world. We’re not going to dwell much on the “spaces” that libraries can offer since that could be a whole other book. Instead we want to highlight a few ways to use *The Artist’s Library* to offer hands-on exploration, particularly as it relates to visual arts and creative writing.

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- Make some room. Find a permanent spot for a table that can be devoted to “making” activities. Stock it with safe supplies, and switch out the project once or twice a month. Display the finished products in the library—this does not have to be anything super fancy; try hanging pieces in a window or devoting space on a nearby endcap to displaying the projects.
- 
- Bring in the experts. Invite local artists or art teachers into the library to demo/teach a hands-on class that explores a particular type of art-making (some ideas: printmaking, papermaking, bookmaking, painting, drawing, illustration, or sculpture). Bill these classes as an “exploration” wherein attendees have the chance to try something new—these need not be master classes, which are usually better left to an art center.

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**TIP:** Check out “Creating Successful Programming Partnerships with Artists and Arts Organizations” on page 17 of this programming guide for best practices when it comes to working with artists at your library.

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- Get out of the library. “Pop-up” hands-on programs are fun ways to bring the library into the community in a more engaging way than simply setting up a table with brochures or library card forms. Have a simple project ready for kids to make for back-to-school fairs, science fairs, community family nights, health fairs, and so on. Have activities for grown-ups to try at your farmer’s market or local arts and craft fairs.
- 
- Make it a series. Approach maker activities the way you would a book club: have them regularly, and give the program time to germinate as people hear about it and get used to the idea—this is particularly important if your library hasn’t offered hands-on programming (especially for grown-ups) in the past. Even if the type of project will differ each time, create coherency by titling the series something as simple as Maker Mondays, Maker Club, DIY @ the Library, Create @ the Library, and so forth.

## Make Your Library Available as an Arts Venue

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 135–160)



THEATER ARTIST BRANDON MONOKIAN says in *The Artist's Library*, “When I first started studying theater in college, I never imagined my work would lead me to doing theater in places that were not theaters; now it is my preference” (page 152).

The reasons artists, writers, and performers are enthusiastic about presenting their work in libraries are numerous, because the library is a community space where all are welcome, including people who might not normally see a professional theater production or visit an exclusive art gallery.

This means that your library—no matter what kind of space you have—is an ideal venue for sharing new and exciting artwork and performances, simply because of the audience. And because the value is in connection, you don't have to be a professional stagehand or curator to make it happen.

Consider your space and equipment:

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- Is there a large meeting room available? As we learned in Brandon Monokian's artist feature (*The Artist's Library*, pages 152–154), it doesn't take special equipment—or even a stage—to put on original performances. A meeting room with enough space for seating and an area where performers can move is enough, and will challenge performers in new ways.

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- What kind of tech is on hand? It doesn't take a lot to enhance a performance or create extra content for your library's website. If your library has an iPad or flip camera, consider filming performance "trailers," outtakes, or interviews with musicians and performers to upload to your library's social media accounts or website. It will generate buzz and add a new layer of participation and community-created content to a performance or series.

- 
- The library space as exhibition space. Trent Miller's ideal library (*The Artist's Library*, pages 147–148) has space for patrons to learn hands-on techniques directly from artists, gallery space for exciting new works in a variety of media, and an art check-out program. But no matter what your library looks like, at least one of these things is possible—maybe all three! Consider these examples:

Caution! Artist @ Work! at Rochester Public Library:  
<http://www.libraryasincubatorproject.org/?p=11624>

Seattle's Art Lending Library:  
[http://www.artlendinglibrary.net/www.artlendinglibrary.net\\_all/Welcome.html](http://www.artlendinglibrary.net/www.artlendinglibrary.net_all/Welcome.html)

Outdoor installations at Cleveland Public Library:  
<http://www.libraryasincubatorproject.org/?p=5053>

Consider your community:

- 
- What special festivals or cultural events are unique to your area? Even small towns usually have something special. The Syttende Mai celebration in Stoughton, Wisconsin, for example, celebrates Norwegian Independence Day and Norwegian heritage. Dances, food, music, and artistic traditions are on full display, and offer a wealth of opportunity

for connections. It's also an opportunity to educate, since the festival draws tourists from all over the region. Your area probably has at least one festival that is unique to the area: film fests, food fests, cultural celebrations, parades, observances, or historical reenactments are all possibilities. Consider how you can leverage these in-place attractions and create value-added programs and connections that will benefit the library through the year.

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- What literary events are in your area? Leverage the well-known province of literacy by making sure your library is at the heart of your area's literary events. Princeton Public Library, well placed between many large cities on the East Coast, has become a go-to stop on book tours for highly acclaimed writers, like Jhumpa Lahiri (*The Artist's Library*, page 139). Be aware of your area's book festivals, author events, readings, and book tours, and consider how you can deepen and expand those offerings at the library. If your area is between major cities, consider getting in touch with broadly local authors, or authors on a book tour, and offer your library as an in-between venue. Storytelling can also be a wonderful way to support literacy *and* performance.

Consider the arts community in your area:

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- Tap in to higher education institutions for new talent. Colleges and universities are often brimming with young, untried artists looking for a venue to share their work. Consider getting in touch with undergrad or MFA programs and giving a new artist a chance, the way Princeton Public Library gave Brandon Monokian a chance (*The Artist's Library*, page 152).
- 
- Where are the cultural institutions? Museums, arts centers, performance venues, opera houses, coffee shops with regular open mics—be aware of what's going on at these places!

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- Offer free previews of upcoming community performances. This is a great way to partner with your local theater or music groups in a way that doesn't set up the library as a competitor.



# *Creating Successful Programming Partnerships with Artists and Arts Organizations*

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 161–179)



IN *The Artist's Library*, we encourage artists, writers, performers, and makers to reach out to library staff to create meaningful and effective partnerships. Obviously such partnerships aren't one-sided, so we wanted to make sure we provided some tips for library staff in such partnerships as well.

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- Be both prepared *and* flexible. What successful partnerships does your library have in place already? Think about what makes those partnerships successful, and see if you can capture some of those points in writing. It doesn't need to be an official contract or policy, but such a summary (even a set of bullet points) can be useful when setting up a new partnership. Here are some example points to get you started:
    - 1) The library will provide all supplies for a workshop up to fifty dollars.
    - 2) The artist partner should provide a supply list to the library two weeks before the program.
    - 3) The artist partner should submit any equipment or technology requests two weeks before the program.

That said, some flexibility is good too. When you talk with a potential partner early on, ask questions to get a sense of their expectations, and be prepared to amend the guidelines that you can (some are obviously nonnegotiable) in order to better accommodate their expectations.

- 
- How can you sweeten the deal? Some artists may be hesitant to commit to teaching a class (and certainly a series of classes) totally free of charge. Can the library pay for supplies or offer a gratuity, even if it's below what the instructor would charge for a typical paying class?
- 
- Talk about your partnerships. The world is a small place, and there's a lot to be said for word-of-mouth promotion. If your artist partner taught a wonderful watercolor class for your summer reading program, share that at the next city or arts council meeting. If your artist partner has a website or a Facebook page, leave a positive review or comment thanking them for their time. In addition to the obvious goodwill this practice generates, promoting the library as an active community partner is *always* a good thing.

# *Help Artists Promote Their Work and Businesses*

(THE ARTIST'S LIBRARY, PAGES 181–191)



LIBRARIES ARE IMPORTANT RESOURCES for those seeking jobs, applying for jobs, or working on job training. Artists, writers, and performers all need to “apply” for opportunities that might not look like traditional jobs, but are still the ways these library users support themselves and their families. For instance, a performance resume is very different from a traditional resume, and a letter written to a publishing house or a literary agent is very different from a traditional cover letter. Just as libraries support job seekers with trainings, workshops, one-on-one appointments, and resource curation, so too can they support people in creative professions with similar programs and resources.

Try not to duplicate programs. Find out what’s being offered in the way of professional development for artists in your community already—check with your local art center, community center, and academic institutions to make sure you’re not duplicating efforts. Ask what holes there are in current offerings, and find out if local teachers or working artists are available and interested in giving presentations at the library.

Host a “Business of Art” workshop in the library. Arrange for a visit from a local or regional artist who is willing to speak to the business side of being a professional artist or maker. This can be offered as a one-off event, but might be quite successful as a series, with topics such as arts resumes, teaching as an artist, tips on creating a successful gallery submission, tips on attending your first craft fair, social media best practices for artists, and so on.

“

**TIP:** Check out the “Work of Art” program series out of Hennepin County Library in Minnesota for more ideas: <http://www.libraryasincubatorproject.org/?p=5750>.

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Highlight the resources you have at the library. Install a resource display on the subject, a physical one in the library and/or a virtual one on Pinterest, Goodreads, or on your library blog. If you do a physical display, include a QR code that points to the virtual resource so that people can bookmark it for later.