2015 EVENT REPORT

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LIBRARIES
The mission of *The Collective* was learning, networking, and kickstarting new ideas among next-generation librarians and library stakeholders where the participants determined the content.

**GOALS:**

- To dissolve the traditional conference divide between “presenters” and “attendees” by making everyone active participants at *The Collective* and by having everyone, even conference organizers, pay an equally low registration fee.

- To make a low-cost event—where all participant costs were subsidized by vendors and the generosity of sponsors. Participants should receive more value than the registration fee paid, as opposed to the traditional profit-generating conference.

- To eliminate vendor expo areas and create an event climate where vendors are treated as colleagues who can learn and collaborate with us to better serve our users. We believe developing relationships is far more effective than hard sales and we think sessions should contain content, not sales pitches.

- To have a practitioner-oriented gathering—aimed at librarians on the front lines rather than highlighting administrators or those in positions of top-level leadership.

- To offer interactive sessions—no “sage on a stage” with an emphasis on tangible takeaways, networking, conversation, hands-on activities, and collaboration.

- To offer transparency and fairness in the proposal review process. Session content was solicited through a public forum with a public voting process combined with a triple-blind peer-review and committee review. We offered feedback on all submissions, including all non-accepted proposals.

- To help keep our content relevant, we shortened the lag between proposals and actual event (ours was less than 6 months, versus 15 months for the American Library Association annual conference).
WHO CAME ¹

WHERE THEY CAME FROM

¹ Job titles of all those who registered.
INFORMATION SHARING

Volunteer notetakers took notes during sessions, which were open for editing and additions from all participants.

We shared documents, handouts, and takeaways with LibraryBoxen during the conference and through Dropbox and Google Docs post-conference.
ALTERNATIVE CONFERENCE SPACES

To encourage informal networking and collaboration, our meeting space featured two pop-up “unconference” spaces, the ideaLibrary and the TinkerLab, in line with our 2015 theme, Libraries as Curators & Creators:

The role of libraries, archives, and librarians is rapidly changing, especially as our spaces come to incorporate 3-D printers, in-house digital collections, and makerspaces. As we create and curate collections, experiences, and spaces for our users, what are some of the challenges and opportunities that we might encounter? What are the necessary skills for 21st century librarians who find themselves in the role of curator and/or creator?

The ideaLibrary was a space for impromptu brainstorming, networking, and discussion. We provided inspirational books on creativity, notepads, and other supplies to help participants kickstart conversations.

The TinkerLab was a mobile makerspace with some simple tools and kits for hands-on exploration and demonstrations of gaming, conductivity and DIY electronics, music-making, 3-D printing and prototyping. Available equipment included 3Doodlers, Makey-Makeys, and LittleBits electronic kits.
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & NETWORKING

To create a casual, fun, and friendly environment, we programmed social outings into The Collective experience.

The night before the conference, participants could choose to partake in “dine arounds,” an easy way to dine well in Knoxville and get to know attendees the night before the conference began. Local hosts arranged reservations at nearby restaurants on and around Market Square and guided the groups to and from dinner.

Opening night, all attendees were invited to a complimentary rockin’ “Blues & BBQ” reception at the iconic Sunsphere, which offers 360° panoramic views of Knoxville. The John Meyers Band performed while participants enjoyed cocktails, a catered dinner from Rickard Ridge Barbeque, and Mag-Pies cakes.

Finally, closing night, attendees were invited to an optional “Literary Libations” pub crawl, organized in partnership with VisitKnoxville. Five local bars offered appetizer specials and literary-themed cocktails to entice Collective attendees to come out and socialize.
PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

We polled participants through a formal survey and also kept an eye on Twitter, which was abuzz with our hashtag (#thecollective2015) during the conference.
94% OF PARTICIPANTS WOULD ATTEND AGAIN

“I've been to a number of conference (ALA-Midwinter, plus things like Cultural Studies Association or American Culture Association), and this has been a profoundly different experience that seems intended to promote reflective engagement and a more flat hierarchy. From the interactive plenary session to the more "workshop" or discussion-promoting individual sessions, this allowed for a much more rewarding experience.”

“One of the best boutique conferences that I have attended in a long time. Sans the weather, the conference was held in a great place, the food was excellent, the organizers did a fantastic job.”

“Seemed like a terrific balance of traditional academic conference and informal workshop/unconference. Loved the community participation and buy-in. The people there were awesome and thoughtful. Organizers did a phenomenal job.”

“This is one of the best conferences I have been to in a long time. I loved all the hands on aspects to it.”

“It's really hard to pick just a few things since everything was really beautifully curated and just so rad.”

“TinkerLab and IdeaLibrary were amazing. The scheduling application was incredibly useful. The times allotted for sessions, and in between sessions, seemed perfect. I didn’t feel too busy, or like I was missing something, which seems like the hardest thing for both traditional conferences and workshops/unconferences.”

“Best conference bag & swag EVER! Really impressed by the sponsors you were able to attract to keep the cost of attending so low.”

“One of the best-organized events I’ve ever been to. Absolutely terrific. You all should be proud.”

“This was also the first library conference that I was happy to wear my badge around outside of the event.”

“Very well-designed, thoughtful and a joy to attend. …Y’all keep on rocking.”
ORGANIZERS

Kris Bronstad
Chris Durman
Corey S. Halaychik - Co-Chair
Ashley Maynor - Co-Chair
Rachel Radom
Steven Milewski

VOLUNTEERS

Michelle Brannen
Peter Fernandez
Michael Rasnake
Caroline Redmond
Christine Reynolds
Allie Roberts
Ingrid Ruffin
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Kendall Bartsch, Third Iron - BrowZine
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