Founded in 2015, the mission of The Collective is learning, networking, and kickstarting new ideas among next-generation librarians and library stakeholders where the participants determine the content.

WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:

EVEN FOOTING: Everyone who attends is an active participant and pays an equally low registration fee. Celebrity culture is for tabloids, not conferences.

ACTIVE LEARNING: We emphasize skill-building, tangible takeaways, and networking. No “CV filler” or “sage on a stage” presentations here!

LOW COST: Designed for affordability, those within driving distance of Knoxville should be able to cover all associated costs of attendance for around $500.

PARTNERSHIPS, NOT SALES: We think developing relationships with vendors is far more effective than hard sales, so we program real discussions rather than sales pitches.

PRACTITIONER-FOCUSED: While administrators can certainly bring a wealth of knowledge and level of expertise, we believe that the ratio of admins to front-line workers should be reflective of the real-world landscape.

NON-PROFIT: Our event is put on by volunteers who give their time in service to the profession. We have no paid or dedicated staff and do not profit off of registration fees; in fact, attendance costs are subsidized for all participants thanks to our hard fundraising work.
WHO CAME IN 2017

In 2017, we grew to nearly our maximum capacity with 292 attendees, an increase of 34% from 2016 and 62% from 2015.

WHERE THEY CAME FROM

Participants hailed from 2 countries (US & Canada) 38 states, including Alaska, representing more than 160 organizations.
2017 THEME

Our 2017 theme was Make it Beautiful, Make it Usable.

From designing library instruction to renovating spaces to creating elegant discovery platforms, aesthetics and utility are at the core of the work we do in libraries and as librarians, archivists, and information specialists. How might we seek more beauty and usability in our exhibitions, projects, programming, services, collections, and instruction?

We invited prospective attendees to share their unique perspectives on this theme by proposing highly interactive sessions that may consist of hands-on workshops, conversations, small group activities, or other innovative and takeaway-driven formats. We also welcome ideas for our IdeaLibrary (book, game, and inspiration library) & TinkerLab (mobile makerspace and demo area).

In lieu of a traditional keynote lecture, we kicked off The Collective 2017 with two icebreakers: a workplace drawing activity aimed at helping us to understand our work environment and an interactive high speed mentoring/proactive feedback activity inspired by Marshall Goldsmith’s FeedForward Tool.
Information Sharing

As with previous years, volunteer notetakers took notes during sessions, which were open for editing and additions from all participants.

We shared documents, handouts, and takeaways during the conference on Sched and through Google Docs post-conference.
ALTERNATIVE CONFERENCE SPACES

To encourage informal networking and collaboration, our meeting space featured pop-up “unconference” spaces, the ideaLibrary and the TinkerLab and the “Shhh…” room.

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 virtual reality headsets, handmade paper animation, DIY electronics, music-making, and digital photo printing. Available tinkering equipment included Chibitronics, LittleBits synth kits, and much more!

The quiet room was a space free of cell phones and computers and dedicated to quiet reflection. The space was equipped with yoga mats and meditative coloring books.
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & NETWORKING

The night before the conference, about 90 participants chose to partake in “dine arounds,” an easy way to dine well in Knoxville and get to know attendees. 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 Southern Speakeasy reception at The Mill and Mine event venue in downtown Knoxville. The eight-piece Old City Buskers performed while participants had photos taken in our photobooth, and enjoyed cocktails, a catered cajun-style 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. Ten local establishments offered appetizer specials and literary-themed cocktails to entice Collective attendees to come out and socialize and the party wrapped up with a Collective attendee-only event at the Oliver Royale restaurant and bar.
This reception is brought to you by GALE
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PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

We polled participants through a formal survey and also kept an eye on Twitter, which was abuzz with our hashtag (#libcol17) during the conference.

Rachel Waiden
@rachell_w

#libcol17 was honestly one of the most hands on, interactive conferences I’ve ever been to (”the” most among lib confs)
4:46 PM - 3 Mar 2017

Miranda Gray
@science4skirts

This is the first conference I’ve ever been at that I wish was longer - I could do this a few more days :) #libcol17
5:56 PM - 3 Mar 2017

Shelly M
@ShellyM_7

On behalf of @overleaf - grateful for all of the work & thought put into such an inclusive & illuminating conference! #libcol17 #knoxrocks
7:59 AM - 4 Mar 2017

Sheelji Kathuria
@sheeljik

The sign of a great conference: a non-techie public services librarian getting hands-on experience using Markdown and GitHub! #libcol17
11:21 AM - 3 Mar 2017 - Knoxville, TN

Trenia Napier
@trenianapier

All that $ saved bc #libcol17 is the single most affordable-yet, still classy&impactful-conference this year? Next purchase: #tinkerlablife
9:18 AM - 3 Mar 2017
OVER 99% OF PARTICIPANTS WOULD ATTEND AGAIN &
HERE’S WHAT THEIR SURVEYS HAD TO SAY:

“ROI. Best return on investment of any conference I’ve attended.”

“When you consider the topics, the cost, … and the overall ‘feel’ of The Collective, there is NO better conference!”

“Useful, powerful, informative, inspired.”

“The Collective is the best run, most fun, and most interesting library conference out there. Nothing beats it.”

“Without a doubt the most interesting and interactive conference.”

“Best. Conference. Ever:”

“Hands down the best conference that I’ve ever attended in the US. Every detail was thought out.”

“AMAZING people and sessions!”

“Best conference I’ve ever attended.”

“I haven’t been this energized by a lib conference in a long while!”

“This puts other conferences to shame.”

“So personable, great information, good/healthy food, amazing swag. I loved this conference!”
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Jess Williams

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