DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION

4

ELECTRONICS —

INTERNET —

DISCOTECH

COMMUNITY —

PUBLIC POLICY

MEDIA —

DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION

THE DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION IS COMPRISED OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, ARTISTS, EDUCATORS, TECHNOLOGISTS, AND ENTREPRENEURS IN DETROIT WHO BELIEVE THAT COMMUNICATION IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT. WE ARE SECURING THAT RIGHT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE BY PROMOTING ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, COMMON OWNERSHIP, AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

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DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION PRINCIPLES

ACCESS

Digital justice ensures that all members of our community have equal access to media and technology, as producers as well as consumers.

Digital justice provides multiple layers of communications infrastructure in order to ensure that every member of the community has access to life-saving emergency information.

Digital justice values all different languages, dialects, and forms of communication.

PARTICIPATION

Digital justice prioritizes the participation of people who have been traditionally excluded from and attacked by media and technology.

Digital justice advances our ability to tell our own stories, as individuals and as communities.

Digital justice values non-digital forms of communication and fosters knowledge-sharing across generations.

Digital justice demystifies technology to the point where we can not only use it, but create our own technologies and participate in the decisions that will shape communications infrastructure.

COMMON OWNERSHIP

Digital justice fuels the creation of knowledge, tools, and technologies that are free and shared openly with the public.

Digital justice promotes diverse business models for the control and distribution of information, including: cooperative business models and municipal ownership.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Digital justice provides spaces through which people can investigate community problems, generate solutions, create media, and organize together.

Digital justice promotes alternative energy, recycling and salvaging technology, and using technology to promote environmental solutions.

Digital justice advances community-based economic development by expanding technology access for small businesses, independent artists, and other entrepreneurs.

Digital justice integrates media and technology into education in order to transform teaching and learning, to value multiple learning styles, and to expand the process of learning beyond the classroom and across the lifespan.

4

COMMUNICATION IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

THE BIRTH OF A DISCOTECH

Diana J Nucera & Nina Bianchi

DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION

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In 2007, the first media lab was built at the Allied Media Conference in response to a need for a tactile learning space. The Allied Media Conference is a laboratory for media-based solutions to the matrix of life-threatening problems we face. The media lab was, and still is, rooted in connecting conversations to hands-on activities that give people the opportunity to practice collective problem solving and collaborative media making. For this initial media lab, AMC organizers did a call out to the Allied Media Projects network to bring as many media-making tools as possible. Portable recording studios, radio transmitter kits, cameras, lights, audio recorders, a green screen, spare computer parts, and computer loans created the frist AMC media lab. It was essentially a "potluck" of technology and media-making knowledge. Together we created a genuine collaborative, collective learning environment that was accessible to all skill levels, ages, and learning styles. This all happened because people took the time to listen to each other and share ideas.

In 2009, the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition formed to apply for broadband stimulus funding. A set of principles were born (can be read on page 3 and 4 of this zine) that revolved around the idea that communication is a fundamental human right. The DDJC decided that,

collective

collaborative

MEDIA LAB

learning

environment

whether we received the stimulus funding or not, we would work together to ensure that the skills and tools needed to communicate in this digital age are accessible to our communities. In order to do this, we identified the need to create a space where people can discover technology together, learn at their own pace, and learn from people who are accessible and understand the context of their neighborhoods and communities. Reflecting upon the first AMC media lab, we knew that community learning spaces were possible, they just require us to activate our local network and allies to bring them to life.

At that point, DiscoTechs, short for Discovering Technology, were born. DiscoTechs have the potential to provide a positive and hopeful experience for youth and seniors, creating a platform where we can teach and learn with each other in ways that allow us to investigate ourselves and our communities. This creates pathways toward solving problems collectively rather than waiting for others to solve them.

The DDJC finds great joy in producing DiscoTechs. We hope to share this joy with you. In this Zine we have articles from our friends in DC, organizing tools, thoughts from organizers, and DiscoTech station modules. This edition of our zine provides a glimpse into our organizing processes in Detroit and DC — while there is a structure behind our DiscoTechs, they are also wonderfully organic and should be flexible to meet the unique needs of all sorts of communities. This is only one way Digital Justice can be put in practice so

we encourage you to try it out, play with the ideas, and share your experiences with us by commenting on our website (detroitdjc.org), striking up a conversation, writing an article for our next zine, or even attending the Allied Media Conference. HAVE FUN and make some digital magic happen!

FUN!

DIGITAL MAGIC!
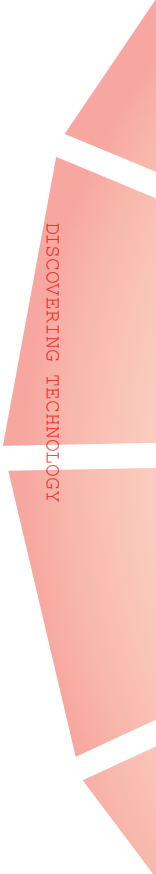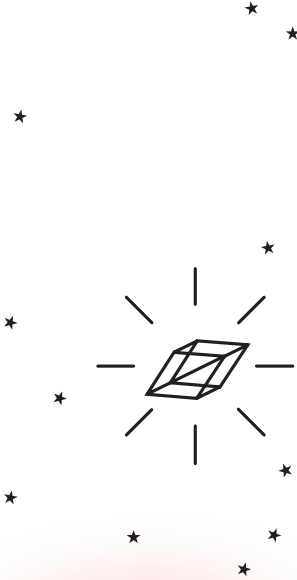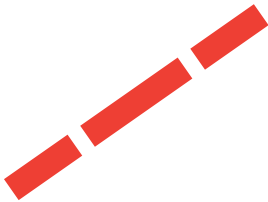
HOW DOES THE ORGANIZING PROCESS BEGIN? HOW DOES A DISCOTECH EMERGE FROM ALL OF THE UNIQUE ABILITIES WITHIN A COALITION OR WORKING GROUP?

HERE ARE A FEW STEPS WE LIKE TO TAKE WHEN ORGANIZING A DISCOTECH.

1.

A SHARED VISION

We begin our DiscoTech conversations about two months in advance, and begin by asking ourselves a series of questions that help identify intentions for the event. Some of these questions include:

→ Why a DiscoTech?

→ Where should the DiscoTech be and why?

→ What skills and tools do people want and need?

→ What skills and tools do people have that can be a part of the DiscoTech?

→ What is currently happening in this community and how can a DiscoTech support it?

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2.

BUILD IT TOGETHER!

DiscoTechs can be big events that can take a lot of work. If everyone pitches in and collaborates, they are a breeze and fun to organize. Below we've listed some roles that have emerged from our experiences in Detroit.

Station Managers: These are the people want to organize a DiscoTech station. A station is similar to a table at a science fair — each station focuses on a unique drop-in activity. See pages 45-62 for examples of some stations we've hosted in Detroit and DC.

Greeters: We have found it's important for participants to be welcomed as they enter a DiscoTech. Greeters are the people who welcome participants, help them navigate the DiscoTech, and solicit donations or surveys.

Graphic Designer: This is someone who is really into making signs for the stations, fliers to promote the event, and any visuals the stations might need to be really awesome.

Host: This is someone who encourages people to explore and keeps people updated on movie screening times or raffle status.

Facilitating Organizers: This is a team of at least two people that help facilitate the collective vision of the event. They send out logistics and reminder emails to station managers, gather equipment and supply needs, and make sure outreach is happening.

FREE

ALL AGES,
ALL WELCOME

(Discovering Technology)

DiscoTech

Electronics
Check out our exciting range of Electronics Workshops and build your own technology that you can take home!

Public Policy
Catch a film screening to learn more about the impact and possibilities of technology within our communities.

Community
Pick up informative literature about Digital Justice and learn about the technology resources in Detroit.

Media
Experiment with multimedia, message making tools to explore how technology can amplify your unique voice and our communitie's stories.

Internet
Visit our Consultation Stations where you can ask questions and get answers! Participants can start new social media accounts and learn more about how to use free, online communication tools.

This is the area where the specific event details would be printed!

For Information, visit:
detroitdjc.org

Brought to you by the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition with endorsement from:
Allied Media Projects, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, Detroit Sierra Club, Hannan House Sound Studio, SE Gallery, East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition, the Open Technology Initiative, The Work Department and Mt Elliot Makerspace.

The Disco DJ: Spinning disco music at a DiscoTech pumps up the fun factor about 10 notches! There's nothing like soldering and learning about the Internet to sweet disco tunes. Dancing from one station to another helps participants retain information.

Documentation Manager: It's important to document the event with photos, interviews, and video. The Documentation Manager works with others to arrange as many types of documentation as possible and makes sure that the videos, photos, etc. become accessible after the event. In Detroit, we've created a series of video documentaries and oral history narratives, and have all of our photos posted to a shared Flickr account.

3.

FLYERS AND OUTREACH

Once you've created a shared vision for your DiscoTech, it's important to start spreading the word at least one month before the event. In Detroit, we created this flier which clearly explains, as an infographic, what a participant can expect to experience. Our colleagues in DC have noted how helpful this flier was in explaining the event, and have since modified the basic structure to meet their organizing needs. It is important to distribute the fliers in print and digitally, as print often reaches communities that are still communicating offline. You can distribute fliers at community events, schools, libraries, recreation centers, local businesses—even dollar stores! Digital fliers can be distributed through social media, blog posts, and email.

DISCOTECHS ARE A GREAT COMMUNITY-ORGANIZING TOOL, AS WELL AS AN ORGANIZER-ORGANIZING TOOL.

4.

GET CREATIVE, USE WHAT YOU HAVE

DiscoTechs are are collective organizing tools that bring out the assets of a community. This is what makes them beautiful and special. DiscoTechs thrive when people take the time to think and work together. We've found that there is room for several ideas to take shape in the science-fair-style format. As a starting point, gather some friends and colleagues and ask each other:

→ What is something you know about technology that you are comfortable sharing with others?

→ What would I like to learn by sharing and exploring with others?

You might not have to go that far! If someone says "I know how to use my phone well," they can do a station that shares that knowledge with others. If someone says "I kind of know Facebook, but I want to know more," they can have a Facebook exploration station where people share FB tricks with each other. Anything is possible and together we are geniuses. Be creative with the resources that you and your colleagues have right in front of you.

5.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A DISCOTECH?

DiscoTechs are a great community-organizing tool, as well as an organizer-organizing tool. Reflecting on the event is a way to keep the DiscoTech community together. Discussing the future while reflecting on the past is a productive way to build upon and create new relationships.

Here are a few questions we often find each other with after a Detroit DiscoTech:

→ What stations do people enjoy? Why?

→ What worked? What didn't work?

→ What recurring questions emerged?

A SHARED VISION
↓
BUILD IT TOGETHER!
↓
FLYERS AND OUTREACH
↓
GET CREATIVE,
USE WHAT YOU HAVE
↓
WHAT HAPPENS AFTER
A DISCOTECH?
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

DIGITAL JUSTICE FROM THE BOTTOM UP: A CAUTIONARY TALE

Zachari J Curtis and Judith Hawkins

WASHINGTON DC

What is the meaning of "bottom up" organizing? What do we mean when we say that, and why is it important? Why, as the DDJC's Organizing Principles suggest, should DiscoTech organizers seek out community members to be experts? What does it mean to prioritize the participation of people who have been "excluded and attacked" by technology? What if there are no techies in the community?

DiscoTechs are more than just pop-up technology schools. They are supposed to be teaching and learning spaces, yes, but they are also supposed to be the places where we practice creating digital justice by critically engaging each other and building our organizing network. When we think about creating a whole, equitable, and just communications landscape, it necessitates a change in how we work, who we work with, who we see as our experts, and what skills/tools we value and teach.

In some cases, especially in communities of color and poor communities, this shifts traditional experts (usually white, male, wealthy) into roles as allies to indigenous organizing leadership and expertise from within a particular community. It also may shift our definition of a "skill" to emphasize the tools that experts

from within already have. To me, it's about questioning and challenging all of our default settings about who's qualified to teach, organize, and make change happen. This is what I think of as bottom-up organizing.

Here are a few ways that DiscoTechs can be developed from the bottom-up to then inform digital justice organizing as a whole:

Shared Principles: "Access to communication is a Human Right" says the United Nations. Bottom-up organizing supposes that communities have known and experienced this for a long time, and that experience makes them qualified to come up with solutions. Develop or adopt principles that acknowledge that, and use them to keep you accountable to acting like you know. Be aware of the values that exist where you are working.

Local Resources: What resources/skills/ strengths/talents already exist where you are working? What has to be brought in from the outside? What is the possible impact of doing the former or the latter, and does that help you meet your goal of creating a critically engaging space for learning?

Standards: How is what you're trying to make (a DiscoTech) any different from a traditional, top-down learning space? What are some experiences people have with traditional learning spaces? Listen to and learn from those.

WHAT IS THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THIS STRATEGY?

What we refer to as the "digital divide" isn't a one-dimensional chasm between the tech haves and have-nots. Instead, I think it's more useful to remember

that the ways communities came to be without access to communications infrastructure constitute decades, even centuries, of intentional neglect and aggressively virulent policy-making against poor communities and communities of color by local and federal governments.

The result is a matrix of obstacles for which there is no one panacea. If even well-intentioned allies miss the fact that racial, gender, digital, class, and food divides are interlocking, they may be blocking a truly transformative process by focusing on giving the help they think is needed. When no effort is made to center the people most affected by the issue now narrowly being framed as the "digital divide," and create space for collective problem-solving, the voices of the privileged become the default frame for the "grassroots community" on "the problem" and how to solve it. As many grassroots organizers already know, there is a keen awareness and mistrust of this dynamic within communities which have survived it and its many effects.

The focus on bottom-up organizing strategy isn't unique to digital justice organizing. The basic theory is that regular people can change policy through practicing and exchanging skills intentionally. Practice refers not specifically to technology but to problem solving, collaboration, and justice-led organizing. In a DiscoTech, everyone builds the future they want to live in now, even if our current reality doesn't affirm that vision. It's a way of acknowledging how top-down decision making has hurt excluded communities and needs to shift.

"DISCOTECHS ARE NOT MAKER FAIRS." — DIANA J NUCERA, DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION

CHANGE POLICY

REGULAR PEOPLE

EXCHANGING SKILLS

PRACTICING SKILLS

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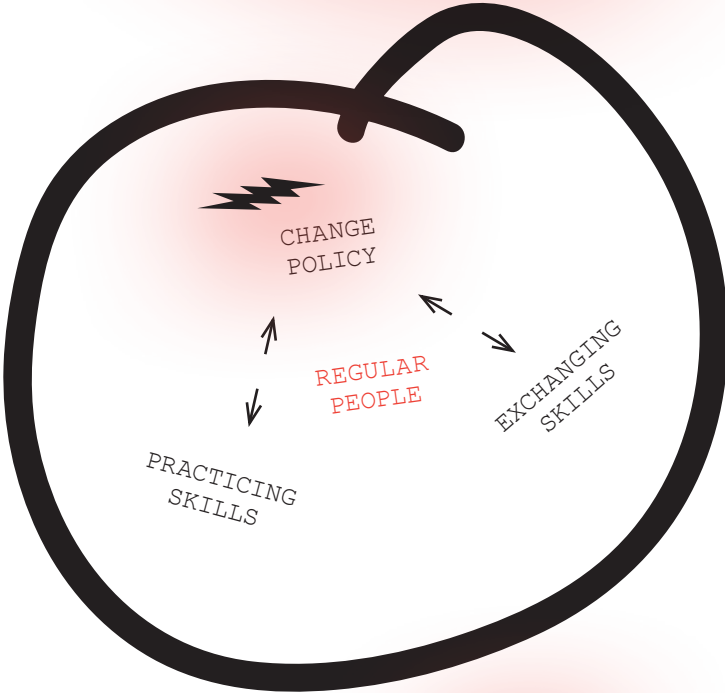
THE DISCOTECH IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH — AND LEARN

Josh Breitbart

WASHINGTON DC

Listening is as important as teaching at a DiscoTech. You can use the event to find out what people need and how members of your community can help each other. Here are some ways the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition works to learn from each DiscoTech.

Note the questions people ask at each station. This tells us about people's challenges and interests. Have an informal debrief with station organizers after the event or use a debrief form.

Conduct interviews with DiscoTech participants. You can involve participants by having a station for recording, editing, and publishing audio to the web. Brainstorm questions that are both fun and informative. It takes work to review and edit the material, so schedule time after the event to go through what you gathered.

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Convene a discussion. A discussion can bring out political issues around Internet access in a community, which you can record in notes or by writing key points up on a board. We're not all comfortable talking about technology, so use a movie or a key question to get things going, and make sure everyone who wants to gets to speak. At the end, offer people a way to stay involved.

Some people prefer to express themselves visually. Offer a place with markers and paper where people can **draw a picture** of their experiences of the Internet, either individually or in a group. People can put contact information or restrictions on use on the back of the drawing.

*

A survey is a good way to get information from everyone who attends, but there are practical and ethical factors to consider. The best thing to do is consult with an experienced researcher on how to craft the survey. Make sure all of the organizers, especially the host venue, know about the survey. Test it beforehand to see if any questions are confusing and how long it takes to complete. Here are some considerations specific to DiscoTechs:

We raffled off a refurbished computer to incentivize people to complete the survey. Because people may fill out the survey anonymously, you need separate tickets for the raffle.

Too many personal questions turn people off. The DDJC asked only for year of birth and zip code because we wanted the event to be intergenerational and to reach people from across the city. We asked people for contact information at the end.

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We didn't want the survey to be like a test. When asking about people's experience with technology, we avoid questions with right and wrong answers.

We wanted to treat people as thinkers and active contributors. Instead of asking people just about what they have done, we asked for ideas of where computer

centers should go and what would help others in Detroit who don't already use the Internet.

The survey is an organizing tool. We asked, "Which of the following are you willing to do to help people use the Internet more?" Make this the last question before you ask people for their contact information and be sure to follow up, especially with the people who offer to do practical things like help with outreach or give money.

By engaging everyone who walks in the door as a source of knowledge, we grow our capacity along with our movement. This cycle of teaching and learning is an essential part of a DiscoTech. It turns an awesome neighborhood technology fair into a campaign for digital justice. Listening is as important as teaching at a DiscoTech.

LISTEN

LISTEN

LISTEN

LISTEN

LISTENING IS AS IMPORTANT AS TEACHING AT A DISCOTECH.

LISTEN

WANNA RUN A DISCOTECH STATION? HELPFUL WORKSHOP STATION TACTICS

Diana J Nucera & Nina Bianchi

DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION

DiscoTech "workshop stations" are project-specific drop-in technology help centers. The event is designed so that participants can come in and bounce around from one station to another. The time participants will spend at each workshop will vary; some people might stay at one station they are really excited about and work on a single project, while others might just peek in, ask a few questions and move on.

Here are some tips to help you manage your station:

1.

IF YOU ARE DOING A DEMONSTRATION, BREAK UP THE DEMO INTO 10-MINUTE CHUNKS.

People learn quickly and deeply when they can experience the knowledge that was just given to them. We suggest a "show and play" method. This means that you first "show" something, then let folks "play" around with what you've just shown them before you move on. This will also help you manage people who drop in after you've already done your demonstration. We realize that there are few things worse than hearing the same thing over and over again. When someone

comes by your workshop station and asks: "Hey, what are you all doing?" — with the "show and play" method, you have time to re-explain yourself while others are experimenting with what you just taught them. Breaking your demonstration down into 10-minute chunks keeps people engaged and allows you to be more flexible.

2.

IF YOU ARE SHOWING PEOPLE HOW TO SET UP AN ACCOUNT OR USE AN ONLINE TOOL, CREATE A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE.

Setting up accounts and using online tools are all about knowing where the right buttons, logins and access areas are. Most of the questions people ask will be about where to find things and how to navigate a program. Making a simple step-by-step, how-to guide will save both you and the participant lots of time and headache.

With the time you'll be saving, you can explore even more possibilities of using the application or account! The "show and play" method works here, too. Email back and forth with someone who just set up an email account so they can experience how fast and easy it truly is. Walk your participant through Skyping with a friend or uploading a photo to their new blog. The fun part is what you can do with your account — that is where you want to spend your time, and how-to guides will get you there faster.

3.

TRAIN SOME PARTICIPANTS TO HELP YOU OUT.

We understand that DiscoTechs can get hectic with people running around getting excited about technology. With this in mind, there are people out in the world who just love to help, and it's likely that some of these people are at the event! If someone understands what you are showing them, you can quickly approach them and say, "Hey you're good at this! Do you want to help me run this station?" They might be shy at first, but reassure them that they are totally capable of teaching. Second, have them go over the activity steps with you so they can practice teaching, and work out any hiccups. Then you're ready to point them in the direction to help someone.

Peer-to-peer learning is one of the most effective ways people retain information. When a participant can relate to the person who is giving the information, it tends to seem more accessible. Be available to support your new assistant and before you know it, you will be checking out other people's stations while your station is fully-staffed by helpers. It's a beautiful thing when information spreads naturally and one singular person does not hold all the information.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS PEOPLE RETAIN INFORMATION.

4.

★

TRY TO AVOID GETTING "TOO TECHNICAL."

The purpose of our DiscoTechs is to make technology accessible and understandable to people who otherwise might not have access. Technical jargon makes technology inaccessible because you may need previous experience to understand it. If you are running an electronics station, do your best to explain the technical aspects through metaphors. For example, if you are talking about sound waves, explain them as ocean waves, or a common, familiar analogy. We want participants to discover technology free of rules and fixed language, we want them to explore and find out ways technology can work for them, as opposed to making them work for technology.

5.

DO A TEST RUN.

If you are demonstrating something new or something you haven't done before, it's helpful to do a small test run before the actual DiscoTech event. A test run will allow you to troubleshoot your setup, make sure your guides and explanations make sense, and gather feedback from a forgiving audience. It also creates an opportunity to make sure you have all of the supplies you need to make your workshop station as awesome as possible. You can ask friends, family, or neighbors to get involved in your test run.

DISCOVERING TECHNOLOGY

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REFLECTIONS ON MANAGING A VIDEO STATION

Judith Hawkins

BROADBAND BRIDGE

As a mother, I felt like our DiscoTechs were a great opportunity to mix up the generations.

It was so great to come in and see all the equipment, to see youth using the equipment, and to have one of them ask "What do you want to learn?" That's a big deal. That type of interaction between seniors and teens breaks down barriers. People who aren't familiar with technology feel like it is a scary thing, and DiscoTechs ease that fear. DiscoTechs are like "Oh, technology can bring us together!" This is community.

It was important to have food at this event. If you want people to use their brain power, you gotta feed their brains. So we set up a simple food processor and showed people how to use it. That's technology too! The kids loved it. They learned how to make food, and we all got to eat the results.

I helped run a video-making workshop. People pitched in and brought lot of equipment to set up a mini video studio. There were some important things we had to keep in mind to have a successful studio:

Flip cams and other cheapo cams are great, but if lots of people are around, sound will be a problem. Bad sound can ruin great footage, and DiscoTechs get loud! I recommend recording in a quiet space separated from the action.

Video footage takes up a lot of disk space quickly. You might need an external hard drive to archive all of your footage. Make sure to be detailed about labeling your video files so you can keep track of what's what.

You will need a computer fast enough to manage video footage. When we first did it, we used an old laptop, and it took us an hour to render three minutes of footage! It's a sure way to end a workshop.

If you're trying to make videos, keep it small! Make a length limit — say just a minute. At the same time, encourage people to conceive of their video as having a beginning, middle, and end. That helps structure the creative process, so people get real clear on what they're trying to make — and it makes it more likely the end result will be something people want to watch!

REFLECTIONS ON DETROIT DISCOTECHS

Dr. Leonard

DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION

My first activity of the day was observing a young Eagle Scout along with his troop and family members completely landscape the flower bed at the neighborhood recreation center. It was awesome! Everyone was planting flowers! Then, I was off to observe the Fishing Derby held for youth at a park located near the old Fort Wayne military barracks! Children were catching fish from the Detroit River and having fun, even though they knew they would not be able to eat the fish!

My last excursion took me to my first DiscoTech, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design. Because I am a very subdued and senior-type person, I really did not relish the idea of dancing but went to the event because of my new-found friends. Imagine my surprise! No one was dancing!

Everyone was either building a computer, looking inside a computer, making electronic stuff, watching a film, or simply just walking and looking at the children (and adults) who were caught up in the moment making electronic stuff and learning how stuff works! It was a bomb for this senior citizen who can not dance! It was the icing on the cake for a very long day! Since then, I have been spreading the word about DiscoTech to my friends to bring their grandchildren. Our neighborhood

recreation center brought 17 children to the DiscoTech held at the Church of the Messiah! They had a blast! Awesome is my new word for the day!!

DISCOTECH
=
ICING ON
THE CAKE!

HOW DID DISCOTECHS COME TO DC?

Preston Rhea

THE DCTROIT CONNECTION

To quote a friend in Detroit, all the ingredients were already there — DC just needed the right sauce. That sauce is the DCtroit connection — the affinity between organizers using technology for social justice in DC and Detroit.

Many people think DC is just a place for bureaucrats and transient twenty somethings. The truth is, locals call that side of things "Washington." The place we live — diverse communities and experiences, struggles and opportunities, living with disenfranchisement in both the national legislature and in our narrative about our city — we call DC. It's the people who have grown up here, migrants who call the city home, and those who actively connect with the community around them.

There is some legacy of organizing with Internet technology for social change in DC. About a decade ago, a "Digital Communities" movement arose in **33** the neighborhood of Columbia Heights. Through the "Digital Community," a network of schools, community organizations, and eldercare homes worked together to build access to the Internet and technology and support educational initiatives. They organized events called "TechnoRodeos." Similar to the DiscoTechs of today, the TechnoRodeos featured challenges and contests for students who were learning to make websites, build

computers, etc. Since then, there hadn't recently been a concerted effort to organize in coalition across fields and around the District on issues of media policy and community technology.

In 2006, community leaders in the Bloomingdale neighborhood of DC discussed plans to make a public WiFi network that anyone in the neighborhood could use. These plans never got traction in 2010 so members connected with the Open Technology Initiative, which had years of experience developing community wireless mesh networks. At a session during the 2011 Allied Media Conference, several OTI team members, organizers from DC service provider Bread for the City, and local technologists, learned about the histories of the Detroit and Philadelphia Digital Justice Coalitions and the associated DiscoTech model.

The perfect opportunity to experiment with a DiscoTech came in November 2011, during a technology festival called Digital Capital Week, or DCWEEK. While DCWEEK is mostly run by for-profit technology companies, providing networking opportunities for professionals interested in technology fields, Broadband Bridge organized a DiscoTech as a community-oriented digital justice event that was relevant to all people — especially those who are generally excluded by the Silicon Valley glitz of most other events during the week.

More than 200 people came to the first DiscoTech event, hosted at Bread for the City. As many as 45 volunteers ran more than ten different stations. We

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helped seniors stay in touch with their grandchildren on Facebook, showed people how to use free and open source software to access tools that others pay hundreds of dollars for, and screened a video by NYC-based People's Production House called "The Internet is Serious Business." The video breaks down all the basics of modern telecommunications, including who owns the pipes. This event elicited very positive feedback — we pulled off a DiscoTech true to the legacy of TechnoRodeos with inspiration from Detroit mixed in.

The Broadband Bridge organized another DiscoTech in February 2012 in DC's Anacostia neighborhood, an area struggling with poverty and high numbers of people who lack Internet access. Thurgood Marshall Academy hosted this DiscoTech, which included members of the local hackerspace HacDC, a computer organization for high school youth called IT Wiz Kids, and a booth for people to make their own videos. A local gardening collective donated sustainable, healthy, and delicious food, while volunteers with microphones gathered stories around the stations during the day.

At this DiscoTech, the deputy Chief Technology Officer of the DC municipal government came to discuss his office's efforts to expand broadband adoption and digital literacy to DC residents. The Broadband Bridge's ability to host political discussions is integral to DC's DiscoTechs, as is its collaborative learning environment.

The potential of DiscoTechs are incredible. During the volunteer wrap-up discussion, we expressed our joy and what we learned during the day. The most amazing

comment came at the end, when Dr. Edgar Cahn, the founder of Time Banking, said:

"YOU ARE BUILDING A NEW KIND OF COMMUNITY, ONE DRAWN FROM A CAPACITY YOU NEVER KNEW EXISTED."

★

DIGITAL JUSTICE IN THE DISTRICT

Louise Thundercloud

THE DCTROIT CONNECTION

My name is Louise Thundercloud, and I am an advocate for the rights of homeless people, the inclusion of indigenous people, and many other causes for justice — including, as of this past year, the cause of digital justice.

Many assume that people who've struggled with poverty and homelessness don't interact with the Internet. That is far from true. The ability to access the Internet has been an empowering experience for me personally, and it is a powerful tool for many disenfranchised people here in the District. We just have to go to much greater lengths and costs than most.

I access the Internet predominantly through my phone, which charges me rates I can barely afford. I can't afford to have an Internet account at home, so when I need to sit down and do work, I need to go to the library — which is busy and has limited hours.

People are hungry to learn about technology. So many people know they're missing out, they just don't know what they can do about it. At the Broadband Bridge's DiscoTechs, you can see the sparks flying — people realizing that they can find career resources online, find health information, be in better touch with their families and networks of support, and so on. This

is what people need to survive and thrive.

It seems as though there are people in power who work to prevent access from being guaranteed to everyone. I surmise that the problem actually is that those who are in top positions intend to stay in them, and that includes limiting who can have access to the Internet. And I believe that we will never see the necessary change we need to see, unless we are willing to take radical steps. Just like in the struggle for agency over the land, over food, over our own bodies — the step of asserting our agency over technology is a matter of justice, and it's transformational.
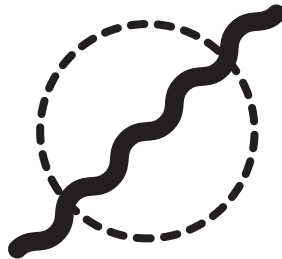
THE DISCOTECH AS PUBLIC AND POLITICAL FORUM

Greg Bloom and Jessie Posilkin

THE DCTROIT CONNECTION

In DC, we've organized two Discovering Technology Fairs in the past year, events that have been fun, educational — and political. Through DiscoTechs, we are resetting DC's digital justice agenda.

It started at the Allied Media Conference. We were inspired by what we learned about the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition: their principles of digital justice, their wireless mesh networking workshops, and especially their literature and DiscoTech events. Through these conversations, we learned about the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), and went home to learn about what was happening in our own communities.

First, we learned a bit about the history of digital justice organizing in DC and we simultaneously sought to learn more about what's happening here today. There are a wide range of people and organizations doing exciting and important work — with STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) Education, community media making, community radio, and more. But as we learned about what the DC government is (and is not) doing to plan for DC's digital future, we became very concerned.

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Especially with regards to the opportunities posed by the BTOP, the experience here in DC is a telling contrast to that of our allies in Philly and Detroit. We discovered that the DC government had applied for this important grant itself, without any public input. The details of their proposal were obscure, and seemingly disconnected from the real needs of communities struggling from digital exclusion.

Eventually, we decided that this conversation needed to be brought out of conference rooms and into community spaces. We needed to demystify this technology, and engage our communities.

The first DiscoTech was hosted at Bread for the City (a large provider of food, legal assistance, health care, and social services to low-income DC residents). This event had three primary components:

A Consultation Space for participants to get hands-on assistance with any kind of digital technology.

A Presentation Space for our organizational partners to demo projects and host workshops.

A "Public Forum" featuring town hall-style conversations about the Internet, public policy, and community technology.

The forum began with a screening of the excellent documentary, "The Internet Is Serious Business," followed by a participatory discussion about how the Internet works. This was a helpful introduction to the next conversation: a panel about opportunities to foster broadband adoption in DC, featuring government officials (both federal and local) and community leaders.

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This was a tense discussion. People asked a lot of questions about what the government is. In the face of shared concern about the lack of details in the city's plan, city officials made pledges on the spot. Even more importantly, quite a few people stepped up to make sure these conversations would continue after the DiscoTech was over.

Those conversations continue still — and an ongoing series of DiscoTechs are driving them forward.

By creating a positive, accessible, and energized space for a community to come together to learn and solve problems, we can create our own forum for the evaluation of our government's role in our digital futures. And that's when real dialogue can begin.

POSITIVE

ENERGIZED

UPLIFTING SPACES!

ACCESSIBLE
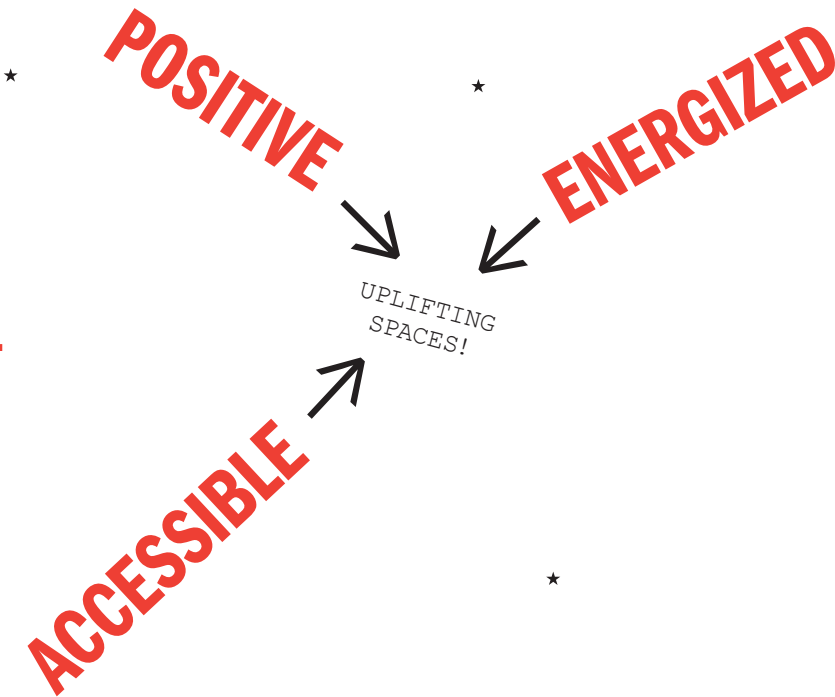
SHARE
YOUR STORY

PRIVACY LITERACY

PC IN YOUR POCKET

DIY SYNTHESIZER

ANATOMY OF A
COMPUTER

BEATMAKING 101

GETING TO KNOW
THE DDJC
PRINCIPLES

DISCOTECH CURRICULUM MODULES!

★

★

★

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SHARE
YOUR STORY

This an activity that collects oral histories in an effort to archive the histories of community members. These stories make up a wealth of collective knowledge and perspective of the times and communities.

DDJC Principles addressed:
Access, Participation, Healthy Communities

Number of participants at a time:
3 per digital recorder
(one interviewer, one interviewee, one listener)

Resources:
2+ volunteers of any age, preferably mix of youth and older adults
1 large table
2 digital audio recorders
Media release forms

Goals
At the end of the workshop participants will ...
Have a basic understanding of why and how to share
oral histories.
Be able to practice active listening.
Learn how to conduct in depth and meaningful interviews.
Learn how to use digital audio recorders.

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What essential questions will be addressed?
Why is collecting a personal history important?
How do you make a personal history come to life?
How does memory shape our communities?

Learning sequence:
  1) Short interactive discussion using these questions:
Why collect oral histories?
What are some way some tactics in collecting oral histories?

2) Demonstrate the following:

> How to use digital audio recorder
> Developing questions
> Active and non intrusive listening

3) Go over the different roles in an interview including:

> Interviewee, one who is being interviewed
> Interviewer, one who ask questions
> Facilitator, time keeper, and one who keeps participants on track

4) Interview each other!

> Conduct one 3-5 minute interview, rotating through the positions of interviewee, interviewer and facilitator.

5) Listen to the interviews.

> Reflect and see if there are any recurring thoughts or themes. Draw connections.

PRIVACY LITERACY

Privacy is a concern to many people, but it seems to be a major concern for those who have not grown up with the Internet. Learning ways to keep your info private, what is private and what isn't, and how to speak up when you feel your privacy rights are violated are some initial steps you can take to make the your internet experience more enjoyable.

DDJC Principles addressed:
Common Ownership, Participation, Healthy Communities

Number of participants at a time:
4 comfortably

Resources:
A computer connected to the Internet.
Literature that includes some common questions asked about privacy in your community.

Here are a few examples of literature content:
Q: Can everyone see the same search results on Google?
A: Google and other search engines use your search history to target ads and other aspects of your search experience.

Q: Do I own all the pictures I upload to Facebook?
A: Kind of. You technically never relinquish ownership of any photos you upload, but you do grant Facebook a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook.

Q: Do you leave info of yourself on every site you visit?
A: Yes, and depending what social networking sites you're logged into at the same time, that site might have access your Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Goals
At the end of the workshop participants will ...
Be able to speak about concerns about privacy.
Learn about cloud computing.
Learn how to find more resources and tools that will inform them
on online privacy concerns.

What essential questions will be addressed?
What does privacy mean?
Where can I learn more about privacy?
What tools can I use to ensure privacy when I'm on the Internet
and for my own computer?
How are privacy concerns brought to the site owner's/company's
attention?

Learning sequence:
This is a consultation station where participants are able come
up and ask specific questions about their privacy concerns. It is
recommended that the station manager(s) have readily available
a document or flip chart with frequently asked questions to begin
conversation. If the station manager(s) do not have answers, it
is recommended that they support the participants in searching
for the answer online. Station managers may also use computers
to teach participants in navigating privacy settings on browsers
and websites.

PC IN YOUR POCKET

DDJC Principles addressed:
Access

Resources:
3 or more different mobile phones: presenter and participant furnished devices on which to demonstrate.
Projector or TV screen with mobile-compatible component or HDMI cords, + Screen-Mirroring apps (for iPhone and Android — TVout2, DisplayOut, FullHDMI etc.)
A computer

Goals
At the end of the workshop participants will ...
Be able to quickly access and use common functions of their phone:

Familiarity with "hotkeys," shortcuts, menus and alpha-num controls.

Creating new contacts with phone/email address etc., + transfer, backup.

Saving a calendar appointment or alarm-clock reminder on the fly.

Making a voice memo or note to self.

Activating WiFi, GPS and/or camera if available.

Camera capture receipts, price match or coupon info.

Using SMS, email, browser and apps to extend functionality, i.e.: using SMS/Text to access web information (e.g. text any query to 466453 (keypad alpha-num of G-O-O-G-L-E) to search the web server and have results sent back as a text).

What essential questions will be addressed?
What are smart phones capable of?
What are ways in which I can access the Internet and other resources without a computer?

How can I maximize the tools included in my smart phone?
What makes a smart phone smart?

Learning sequence:
1) Begin by framing the workshop as something useful for anyone / everyone ("That means you!" "Come on, we're learning Phone-Fu!")

2) Give as much of a background on modern network connectivity, Twitter revolutions, and disposable cellphones from 7-Eleven as you can.

3) Ask participants what kind of phones they have and begin determining competency by asking how regularly or easily they employ the 7+ goals (skills).

4) Start demonstrating a skill level that will be useful enough to engage a group for 5-7 minutes based on their responses and interest.

> After a first walk through, I suggest briefer a summary demo on another device to show that the features and typical access schemas are held in common.

> Once every 30 minutes or so I will end a session with a skill or functionality that is a "reach" compared to general assessed skills or average devices present (on-device word processing/publishing to web or print, video-editing, OCR, translation, mobile payment processing, WiFi-hotspot creation or tethering cellular IP connection for PC, etc).

> Several people will tend to stay on for multiple demo-sessions.

> I encourage new participants to the front for demos. If enough advanced users come by or stay around, I pair them with novices to expand the reach of the session or solidify newly acquired skills by teaching in smaller satellite groups.

DIY SYNTHESIZER

The Making Noise workshop serves as an introduction to electronics, electronic components, sound waves, and wave oscillation via spoken instruction and hands-on creation of a fully functional and infinitely expandable electronic musical instrument.

DDJC Principles addressed:
Access, Participation

Number of participants at a time:
10 comfortably, 20 max

Resources
1 large table, 1-2 instructors
1-2 youth volunteers
Synth kits (http://paia.com/bckit1/)
1x 1.5v AA battery
3x magnets
Test leads (2x black, red, white, yellow, green)
Small speakers
Paper (for drawing resistive lines)
Pencils (for drawing resistive lines)
Pen caps (for twisting wires)
Tacks (for poking holes in synth cards)

Goals
At the end of the workshop participants will ...
Develop the basic skills necessary to understand these concepts and apply them to create their a basic electronic oscillator/synthesizer. Using various electronic prototyping components used by real-world electrical engineers such as capacitors, resistors, photoresistors, potentiometers, LEDs and power supplies, students will build their own synthesizer whose sound and performance may be altered through various modifications and interactions with different electronic components and materials.

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What essential questions will be addressed?

What is frequency?

How is sound made?

What is electricity?

How do speakers work?

What is a synthesizer and how does it work?

Learning sequence:

1) Explain the following:

A synthesizer is a device that generates bursts of electrical charge to make sound.

A speaker is a device that converts electrical energy into sound.

Sound is a series of compressed waves that travel through air, water, or other types of matter that stimulate the organs in our ears and and are interpreted by our brain.

Frequency is the back and forth speed of an object.
*Keyboard with assoc. frequencies, i.e. key of A = 440Hz, etc.
*Range of human hearing 20Hz-20000Hz.

2) Demonstrate how it all works:

Find a tone generator on the Internet. Plug the computer in and play the sounds that come out of the tone generator with your speakers. Re-explain speakers, sound and frequencies, and listen to the different tones.

Ask participants questions like: "Can you tell the difference in frequencies?" "Do you know why they are different?"

If you have a keyboard or a keyboard phone app, bust it out! Play a note on the keyboard and see if participants can find the matching frequencies on the tone generator.

3) Now explain the following:

Electrical components are the basic building blocks of electrical circuits. Electric components change the flow of electrical charge.

A resistor is an electrical component that "slows down" or resists the flow of electrical current.
*Metaphor: Small water pipe

A capacitor is an electrical component that stores and releases electrical charge either all at once or as needed. It is similar to a battery, but it does not produce electricity — it only stores and releases it.

*Metaphor: Water tank with a trap door that can let out little bits
of electrical current, or let it out all at once.

A transistor is an electrical component that uses a small amount of voltage to control the current of a larger amount of voltage.
*Metaphor: Water valve with someone at the wheel.

A potentiometer is a type of variable resistor whose change in resistance is determined by the position of its spindle.

A photoresistor is a type of variable resistor whose change in resistance is determined by its exposure to light.

4) Time to make the Synth!

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Grab your Synth kits (http://paia.com/bckit1/) and lay out all of the components in front of you. Have the participants identify the components and their functions before diving into the Synth kit instructions.

Once everyone is on the same page with components follow the Synth kit instructions, build your Synth, and start rocking out!

*Adjust the resistance in the circuit by using different-

sized resistors and photoresistors.

 * Experiment with external components to see if you can make sounds with salt water, pizza, or peanut butter.

5) Take some time to recap.

Electricity can be intense to learn about in a few minutes. Allow for participants to reiterate what they just learned by making connections to some everyday things they use and how the Synth works. Creating metaphors when learning science makes the knowledge more accessible while understanding the world around you. Have participants share their techniques, their experiments, and see if they can answer each others questions.

ANATOMY OF A COMPUTER

This station helps folks get over their fears of breaking computers and gives them the skills to dive right into a computer to practice self maintenance and care.

DDJC Principles addressed:
Access, Participation, Common Ownership

Number of participants at a time:
8 comfortably, 20 max depending on space

Resources
1 Assembled desktop computer
Monitor
Mouse
Keyboard
Powerstrip

Goals
At the end of the workshop participants will ...
Participants will be able to:

Identify the basic parts inside of a computer and know how they work.

Begin basic troubleshooting methods.

Use Internet search engines to finding answers to computer problems.

What essential questions will be addressed?

How do you begin trouble shooting a computer that does not
start up?

How do I take a computer apart?

How do you go about fixing a computer?

What is troubleshooting?

Learning Sequence
Total time: 1 hour per workshop
Times are subject to change depending on the age or ability of the audience.

1) Open up an assembled desktop computer and lay it out on the table in a way where the audience can see the components.

2) Introduce the concept of the station. Ask participants to state general questions they have about how computers work.

3) Go over some safety practices for working on a computer like:

> Make sure the computer is unplugged and no electricity is active.

> Before touching internal components, ground yourself by touching a metal part on the computer case.

> Watch out for sharp edges!

> Make sure there are no loose screws cause you don't want one to fall in a component and mess up your computer.

4) Explain how different parts of the computer work. Unplug the components as you explain them. Let the participants handle the parts and instruct them on how to plug them back in.

PROCESSOR — Also known as "CPU" is the brain of your computer. All of the work done on the computer is done directly or indirectly by the processor.

PROCESSOR HEAT-SINK — Think of the processor as a car engine and the heat-sink as a radiator. It dissipates heat away from the processor usually with the aid of a fan. If the processor gets too hot, it can become unstable and even cook itself to the point not working anymore.

MOTHERBOARD — This is sometimes called the "mainboard" or "logic board." All of the components in the computer connect to the motherboard. The motherboard is full of slots and inputs

that all of your different components plug into with minimal chance of putting the wrong part in the wrong place.

POWER SUPPLY — Supplies the power to your computer and to most of the components attached to it.

RAM — or "Random Access Memory." The programs that run on your computer are loaded from the slower hard drive into the lightning fast RAM and then run by the processor. When your computer is shut off, the programs stored in the RAM are wiped clean.

HARD DRIVE — Your hard drive is where your operating system (Windows, Linux), all of your programs, and other precious data is stored on the computer. When your computer is shut down your data is safely stored on its special magnetic disks or platters (so keep powerful magnets away!) The most popular hard drives are SATA.

DVD/CD-ROM — Also called an "optical drive." This component uses a laser to read CDs and DVDs, making it possible to load programs, listen to audio CDs, as well as play movies off DVDs.

VIDEO CARD — Or graphics processing unit "GPU." The video card is dedicated to handling visual information from your RAM and processor for display on a video monitor. Some motherboards have built-in video, but in general an actual video card is more powerful.

5) Gather any question people have and, to your best ability, try and answer them by using the exposed desktop computer.

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6) Give participants examples of search engine queries to find answers to more specific computer questions. This will allow them to begin troubleshooting. Share your troubleshooting tactics with them.

7) Share whatever knowledge you have on open source and free software to spread the word!

BEAT MAKING 101

Everyone can relate to music and most music these days is made using technology. This helps to make the experience with technology accessible to anyone. It's fun and allows people to relax an as they go from station-to-station learning how to integrate technology into their lives. Better yet, they learn that technology is a tool that can be helpful, that you don't need to go out and buy anything new, and that there's open source programs that do the same things as the expensive programs. This helps people be able to see themselves using the technology.

DDJC Principles addressed:
Access, Participation, Common Ownership

Number of participants at a time:
3-6 comfortably (Depends on how many computers you have)

Resources:
3 Computers with Audacity or GarageBand installed
6 ft. table
Electricity
Open minds

Goals
At the end of the workshop participants will ...
Create, compose and arrange sounds that make music.

59 *What essential questions will be addressed?*
> What is Audacity and GarageBand?
> Why is beat making important?
> What is the difference between making music and making beats?
> What does music have to do with social justice?

Learning sequence:
1) Get your computers set up and software open before participants arrive.

2) Explain how to create a file. Have them set up a clearly labeled folder on the desktop where they will save their beats.

3) Have participants take a look at the menu items, then cover each tool with a brief description so anyone can familiarize themselves with where these items are located.

4) Play a sample beat and break down its parts.
Have participants capture sound with an audio recorder, find sounds online, and make sounds with the various instruments you may have available.

Explain how to capture and import these sounds into Audacity or GarageBand (whichever you feel most comfortable using).
Then show them briefly about layering, loops, and any other functions the software may have.

Have them play around and discover sounds they like.

Then have them create a timed sequence of 8 measures.
Finally, allow participants to share their beats and beat-making process with each other. See if they can identify what instruments they used and explain why they used them. Have them articulate the mood they wanted to create or the concept behind their beat.

GETING TO KNOW THE DDJC PRINCIPLES

This is an activity designed to foster discussion about the DDJC principles.

Number of participants at a time:
5

Resources:
A big sheet of paper
Markers
Some normal 8x11 paper
Pens
Printed copies of the DDJC principles

Goals
Participants will learn why it is important to organize from shared principles, become familiar with the DDJC principles, and brainstorm what looks like to put the DDJC principles into practice at the individual, community, and city/state levels.

What essential questions will be addressed?
> What principles guide your life?
> Why are principles important?
> What are the DDJC principles?
> How can we put the DDJC principles into practice (as individuals, as communities and at the level of city/state policy)?

Learning sequence:

1) Present the large piece of poster paper with the 4 major DDJC principles (Access, Participation, Common Ownership and Healthy Communities). Discuss with participants: What principles guide your life? Have them choose one and add it to the poster.

2) Hand out the sheets with detailed DDJC principles. After participants read them, explain how they were formed and ask which ones stand out to them. Ask which ones they have questions about, or others that resonate with their own principles. Discuss.

3) Hand out blank 8.5x11 paper and fold into 4 squares. Have each participant choose one of the DDJC principles and write that principle in the upper left corner. Ask them to brainstorm ideas for what that principle looks like in practice on an individual level.

Then ask everyone to pass their paper to the left. Ask participants to read the previous two squares and in the bottom right square, add their own brainstorm around the question: What would this principle look like in practice at the community level? Ask everyone to pass their papers to the left again and after reading the previous three squares, add their own brainstorm inside the fourth square, answering the question: What does this principle look like in practice at the city/state level? Ask anyone who wants to share their full paper to do so.

WHO IS THE DETROIT DIGITAL JUSTICE COALITION?

5E GALLERY, 48217 HEALTH AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION, THE READING CORNER / KEMENY REC CENTER, BRIDGING COMMUNITIES INC., EAST MICHIGAN ENVIROMENTMENTAL ACTION COUNCIL, ALLIED MEDIA PROJECTS, MICHIGAN WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION, PEOPLE UNITED AS ONE, URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVES / REAL MEDIA, DETROIT SUMMER, HANNAN HOUSE, DETROIT SIERRA CLUB'S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM, OPEN TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE, THE WORK DEPARTMENT, DETROIT PROJECT ARCHIVE, MT. ELLIOT MAKERSPACE, RUTH ELLIS CENTER.

PREVIOUS ISSUES

HERE'S A COUPLE WAYS YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO OUR PREVIOUS ISSUES:

DOWNLOAD DIGITAL PDFS AT DETROITDJC.ORG/ZINES/.

VISIT ALLIED MEDIA PROJECT'S ONLINE STORE: STORE.ALLIEDMEDIA.ORG.

EMAIL NINA BIANCHI FROM THE WORK DEPARTMENT: NINA@THEWORKDEPT.COM

SPECIAL THANK YOU
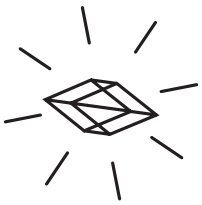
PAUL ABOWD, EDITING AND PROOFREADING

TO ALL OF THOSE THAT SUBMITTED STATION MODULES

NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION'S OPEN TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

WASHINGTON DC'S BROADBAND BRIDGE

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