**Library of Things: The What, Why, and How of Lending Objects**

<https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/library-of-things.html>

Hey library workers, are you thinking of starting a Library of Things for your community? From tools to toys, cameras to kitchen appliances, fishing gear to musical instruments, and from blood pressure monitors to robots – you can do it! The presenters talk about launching these collections for a small library and a large suburban children’s collection. They highlight their experiences selecting, budgeting, cataloging, displaying, sustaining, and marketing their Library of Things. They also share what has and hasn’t worked, and you’ll leave with strategies for making the right decisions for your community.

Presented by: Dania Souid, Young Adult Services Librarian, Baldwinsville Public Library (NY); and Lindsay Delaney, Freelance Librarian (OR)

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |
| **Getting Started** |
| As you begin to explore growing a Library of Things (LoT), consider or discuss with a team of library staff from different departments, these scoping questions to get started.* How does circulating items, or adding a LoT collection, align with the library’s mission or vision? Do you address equity or improving access for all in your mission?
* What is our budget and/or where will the budget for the LoT come from? Can we create a dedicated budget line in the future library budget? (Remember to include packaging, containers, and labels in the budget, along with costs for maintenance and replacement parts. Set aside about 20% of the total cost for maintenance and replacements and about 5% as a safety net for the inevitable elements you forget.)
* Who will be involved in selecting, cataloging, maintaining, displaying, and marketing items? Should we form a cross-departmental team? Who will be the coordinator or go-to person for the LoT collection? Who can be backup when needed or when positions change?
* Where can the collection live? (Remember that when items are popular and consistently checked out, you will need less space!)
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| **Determining Items for the Collection** |
| As you begin, remember you can start small, with just a few items in your LoT, and build up as you learn more about managing the collection and as you gather more input from the rest of your organization and from the community. * What circulating items could supplement our popular collections? Here are some examples of how your more popular existing collections can align with new LoT items:

Current collection: Vinyl records ---LoT: Record player Current collection: Playaway--- LoT: Bluetooth speakerCurrent collection: Picture books---LoT: TonieboxCurrent collection: Health books---LoT: Blood pressure monitor and step counterCurrent collection: Launchpads---LoT: Video games and gaming systemCurrent Collection: Camping---LoT: Tent or large backyard games (e.g. cornhole)Current Collection: Science books---Microscopes and telescopes Current Collection: Fiber arts---LoT: Loom or 'knit your own scarf’ kitCurrent Collection: Music---LoT: DJ mixing board* Research other LoT collections. There are a number of examples listed on the event page or check out the [Library of Things entry on Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Things) for both a list of types of collections and organizations hosting a LoT.
* In addition to reaching out internally for input from colleagues, be sure to check in with other learning organizations in your community for their ideas, including children’s and science museums, schools, toy libraries, community centers, and more.
* Do your research on new items. Ads on social media will show items of interest to your community (if you’re frequently seeing the same ad, so are your followers!), and look for consumer reviews to gauge popularity and reliability. Gift guides for different age groups are another great resource.
* Look and try to buy locally. Local businesses are a great resource for learning about potential items, including their popularity in the community! Many choose to partner with the library, either providing donated items, or offering to help with item maintenance or repair.
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| **Weighing Factors for Selection**  |
| Lindsay provided a selection rubric in the webinar that can help to weigh decisions about item selection for your LoT. In your selection process, use these three factors to verify selection decisions.**Categories**What is the genre of item being considered? (e.g. early literacy activities, board games, construction activities, robots, scientific models, toys, musical instruments, kitchen equipment, exercise equipment, museum or park passes, etc.)**Practicality**What fits logistically? (e.g. self-contained, robust, not date-specific)**Priorities**What are your goals for the collection? How do they align with your library’s vision and mission? (e.g. multilingual, accessible design, inclusive, environmentally friendly) |
| **Discoverability: Preparing Items for Circulation** |
| Once you’ve made your decision about items to include in your collection, decisions around cataloging, packaging, and labeling are made, to ensure the collection is the most “discoverable” it can be! The presenters shared multiple tips to consider as you prepare items for circulation.1. **Cataloging and creating a MARC record**
* Add the items to your library’s catalog (note resources on cataloging are listed on the webinar event page)
* Take time and write an exciting, engaging, and detailed description
* Add tags and genre terms to enhance searchability in the catalog
* Include pricing information and general rules on how the item must be returned
* Include photos
* Add specific LoT shelf location, collection code, call number, etc.
* Include translation of description and location information, when possible, to improve discoverability for other languages spoken in the community
1. **Packaging**
* Budget for the cost of cases, containers, and labels. *Top tip:* padded fabric lunchboxes make great cases!
* Consider using transparent or original packaging so contents are easily identifiable from the outside
* Spend extra funds upfront to get strong cases, screen protectors, padded bags, etc. to reduce accidental damage as much as possible
* Consider how the patron will repackage the item
	+ How can I make easy step-by-step instructions for repackaging this item?
	+ Will the items break if they are just thrown into the bag?
	+ Will a different sized case work better?
1. **Labeling**
* Label with barcode, RFID tag, item name, and contents
* Be sure all components of the item include library label or identifier
* Include a laminated label or a label in a plastic sleeve on the outside of the bag, with the name of the kit/item and the price breakdown per item. Include the barcode on this label.
1. **Display**
* Remember that there will be little to display when your items are checked out, so you may need less space than you think!
* Locating items near related collections can be a great way to display items for high discoverability
* Locate items near where patrons wait like the circulation or reference desks
1. **Marketing**
* Write a press release and share through available communication challenges
* Local news outlets will likely want to do stories on your new items, so make sure you know how to use them/show them off!
* If you have a rotating display space, consider displaying your new items for an initial period to raise awareness, and be prepared for the items to all get checked out!
* Incorporate items into your library programming, e.g.:
	+ - Use a Toniebox during Storytime
		- Use the Bluetooth speaker during a book club
		- Have a treasure hunting program and use a metal detector

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| **Action Plan: (include next steps, who, when, etc.)** |

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