Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces

TRANSFORMATION STORY

James Kennedy Public Library

Dyersville, Iowa

The Community

Every community is unique

Dyersville, Iowa

- **Population:** 4,196
- **Location:** Eastern Delaware and western Dubuque counties
- **Attraction:** Home of the *Field of Dreams* baseball field

“The JKPL is an anchor for the community, serving as a resource for information and recreation as well as the place to meet, gather, and learn.”

Shirley Vonderhaar, Library Director

Before the Changes

Small libraries can create Smart Spaces

“It is clear that the Dyersville community wants the library to take the lead in engaging the community in learning and creating.”

The Community's Living Room

Community is apparent everywhere you look at the James Kennedy Public Library. Local schools showcase their art, people engage with one another, and even on a beautiful sunny day, the library is bustling. It is not unusual to hear a child crying and proclaiming "I don't want to leave!"

JKPL decided to take advantage of the community feel they already have and create a space that is welcoming and active.

Art on display at JKPL.

Engage & Explore

Engaging community members in visioning and planning

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Using a variety of community discovery tools, the library learned the needs and wants of their community.

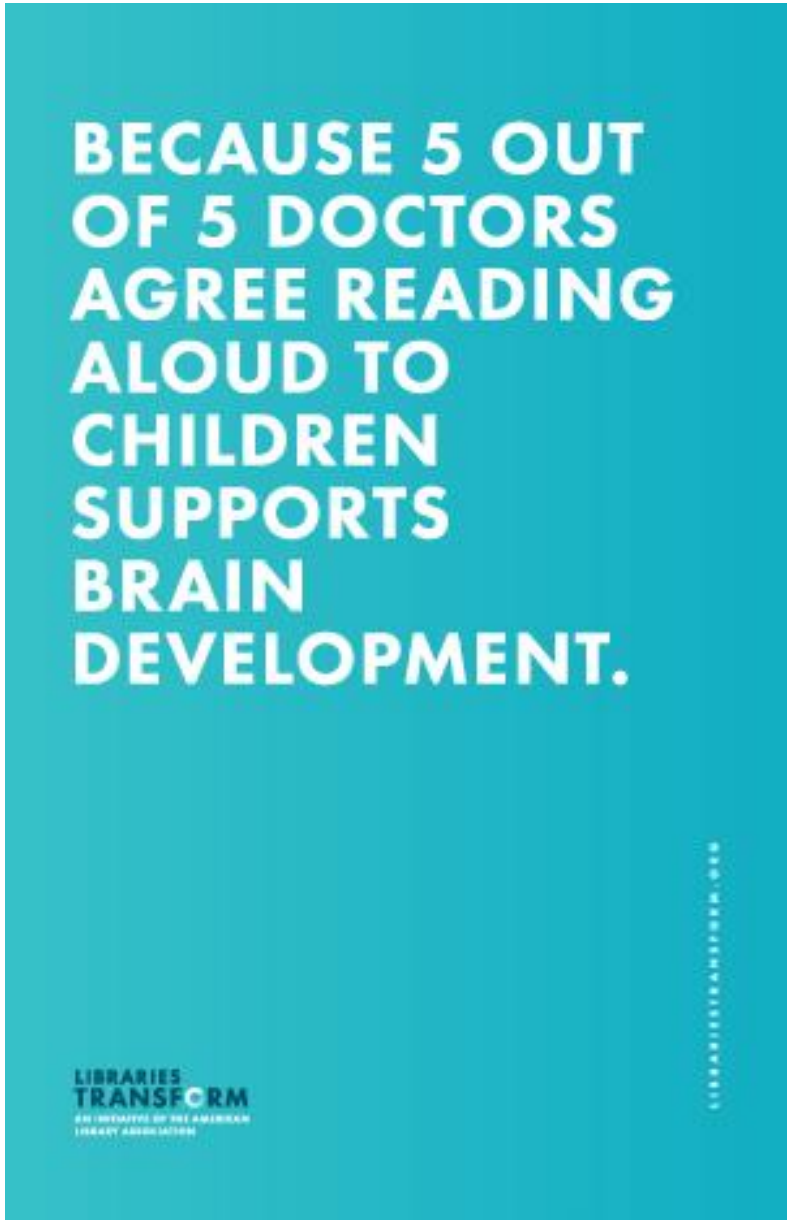
Libraries Transform!

JKPL began their community discovery process by utilizing the American Library Association advocacy campaign, *Libraries Transform*. Campaign statements were posted and community members were asked to circle the one most important to them. Library director Shirley Vonderhaar was not surprised by the results.

The statement that was circled the most was "Because 5 out of 5 doctors agree reading aloud to children supports brain development."

Several tied for second: "Because a library card is the most important school supply of all;" "Because learning to read comes before reading to learn;" "Because hands on learning builds stronger brains;" "Because there is no single source for information;" and "Because students who spend time reading over the summer end up on the honor roll in the fall."

Do you notice a theme?



Surveys, Interviews, Dot Boards – Oh my!

Following the *Libraries Transform* community discovery process, JKPL moved on to surveys, interview/brainstorming sessions and dot boards in order to learn more about what the community wanted from the library.

The survey yielded a more surprising result: "I was surprised at how many survey responses indicated an interest in culinary arts (kitchen); now we'll see what happens with the dot boards from a broader audience."

JKPL Staff Get the Ideation Going

The key “rule” of brainstorming or ideation is to defer judgment – there are no “bad” ideas. Just let all ideas flow onto post-it notes, no matter how impractical or wild they seem.

Interviews, Brainstorming, Ideation

Eight participants, including teens, seniors, crafters and educators, participated in an ideation session, but it was the brainstorming session with the library board that may have been the most surprising for Vonderhaar.

"The session with the Board surprised me – they had so many ideas and were so excited sharing those thoughts. Contents of all the interviews were so divergent, they blew me out of the water. My concern had been that people were too familiar [with the library] to come up with new ideas but that didn't happen –they had so many ideas."

JKPL ideation in progress, including snacks.

Dot Boards in the Community

Dot boards featured eight themes/categories.

The top three to emerge were hobbies and crafts, food and culinary arts, and STEM.

Prepare for Change

Making way for transformation

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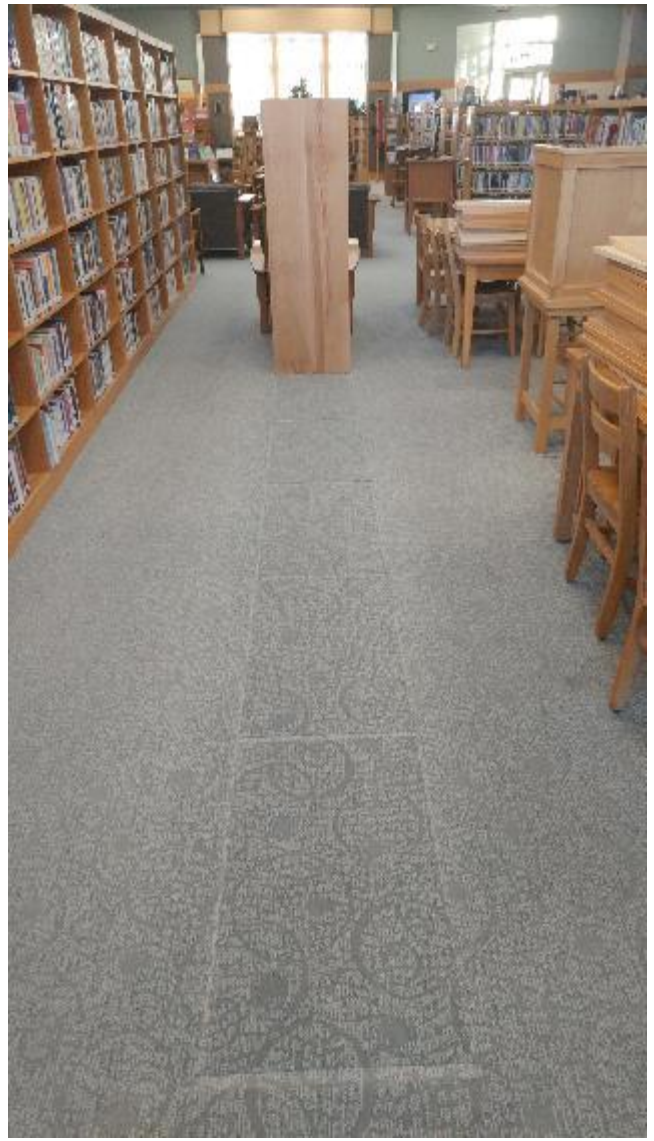
Clearing Space for Active Learning

In order to make space for active learning, the JKPL underwent an extensive weeding process that also included shifting collections and utilizing new shelf heights. They utilized a 2D floorplan to try different configurations.

Reconfiguring Space



Moving the Furniture

After weeding, shelving was completely reconfigured in order to open up the space for active learning.

Transform

Make it happen!

Unpacking the Tools for Active Learning

Just a small selection of the active learning materials and activities purchased by the JKPL for their *Smart Space.*

Flexible Furnishings

Allowing for flexibility of the physical arrangement of a smart space fosters more opportunities for active learning. Instead of an immobile large table, smaller units can be configured for large or small groups.

“The flexible tables are great. We are seeking another grant to buy more tables for other spaces.”

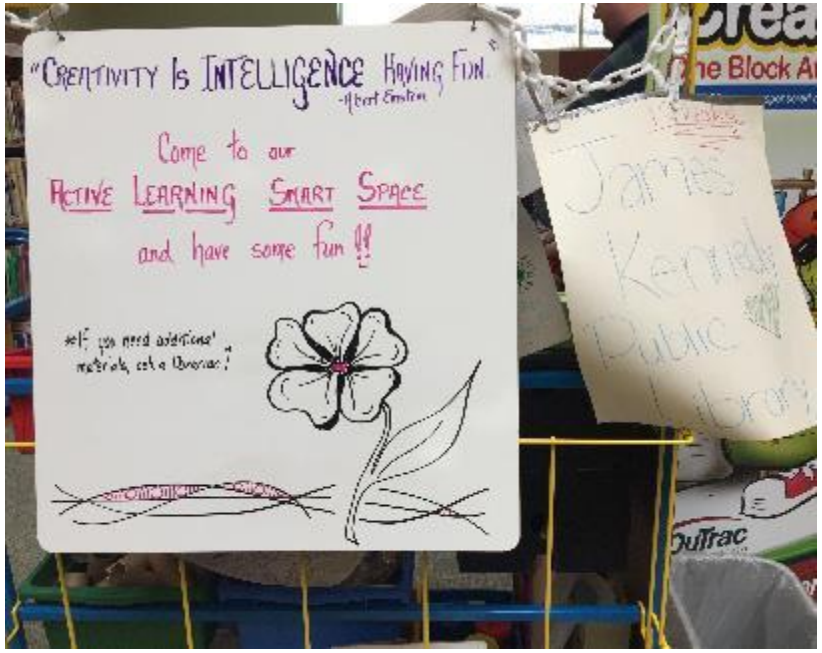
Half-round and rectangular flipper tables roll on swivel casters and flip down for easy storage.

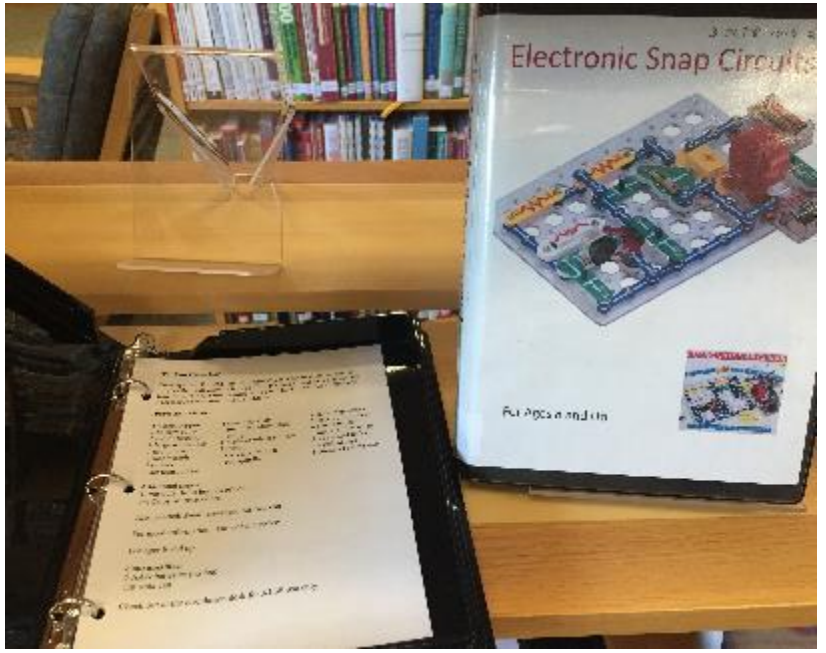
JKPL is having a competition to name their new space.

Learn

Activate the space with programming

Active Learning Programming at JKPL





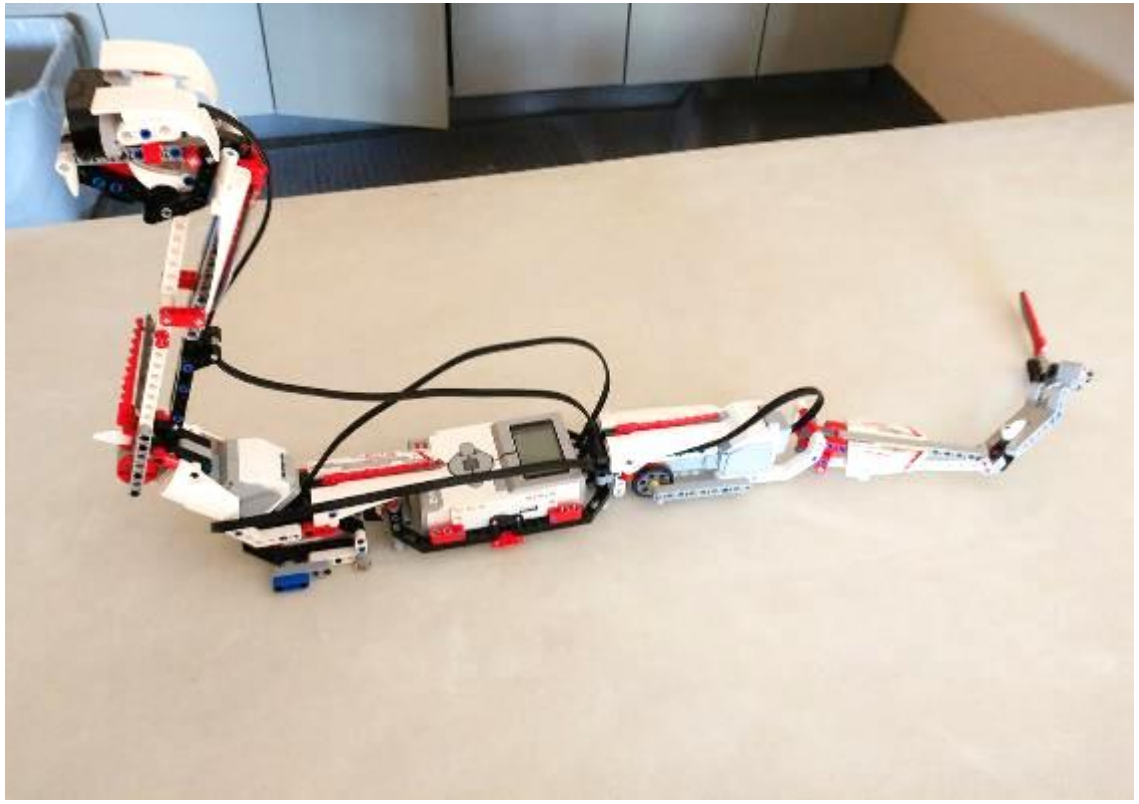
JKPL put a craft cart in the smart space, filled with different supplies such as paper, markers, tape, glue, and other crafting materials for all ages to create with — it has been going over incredibly well. The library is also offering a variety of STEAM, DIY and DIT programming. Examples include Nerf contests, LEGO® building, video and board game programs, robotics and circuits activities, coloring and craft gatherings and workshops, and much more.

LEGO® Mindstorm Challenge

In the new smart space, JKPL offered a month-long LEGO® Mindstorm program where kids worked together to build programable robots. In the first 3 weeks, the kids came in on Saturday mornings and went to work making the robots. The last week was spent programming and playing with them via Bluetooth tablet programs.

The Mindstorms were donated to the library by DuTrac Community Credit Union.

JKPL has also scheduled a LEGO® Day Camp for this fall. This partnership with the Iowa Extension and Outreach will teach kids the basics of coding and programming a EV3 robot.



The kids named this snake bot "Dan Fangerald the 3rd."

Active Learning Programming at JKPL

A “make and take” passive program at JKPL. It’s still *active* learning!

Teens are the first to try out the new active learning materials at Teen Tech Night. The teen advisory council is also very involved in running programs focusing on STEAM concepts.

Celebrate & Sustain

Continual community connection

The Dyersville community is benefiting from the new active learning space. It is providing patrons with the opportunity to try new things, be creative and engage with one another.

"Adding the active learning space has taken community engagement to a whole new level."

"One of the most exciting things is it's giving patrons an opportunity to do something else at the library."

"The active space is great because anybody who walks in the door can use the new space, and it serves a lot of needs for the community."

"The space gives the community an opportunity to experiment with their creativity."

"The most exciting part about the new space is the excitement that it brings to our patrons!"

The power of community collaboration

JKPL has multiple community partnerships – with the historical society, schools, and many local businesses and organizations. They are partnering with the local extension services for 3 different STEM programs this summer.

For more information on how Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces and more case studies please visit **oc.lc/SmartSpaces.**

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