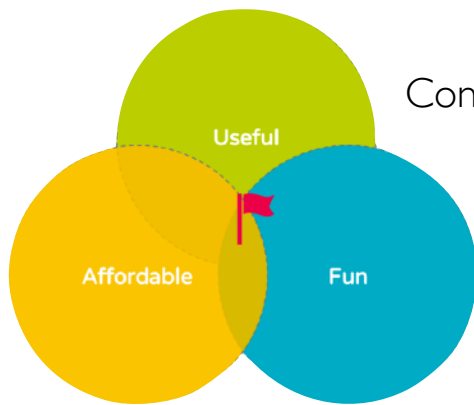


# 2020 Event Report

AFFORDABLE | USEFUL | FUN  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE COLLECTIVE  
LEARN. CREATE. COLLABORATE.

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Conceived in 2014, The Library Collective is an independent, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to education and innovation for better librarianship. Our events are all about learning, networking, and kickstarting new ideas among next-generation librarians and library stakeholders through exceptionally useful, fun, and affordable professional development.

We started by hosting an annual gathering, called The Collective, that continues each year and have grown to offer other year-round programming and resources to serve curious librarians from around the globe. The Collective 2020 marked our 6th annual gathering!

Other initiatives in 2020 include *The Exchange* (described later in this report) and a two-day regional workshop on *Design-Thinking for Library Leadership*.

To find out more about what makes us unique in the professional development landscape, check out our website:

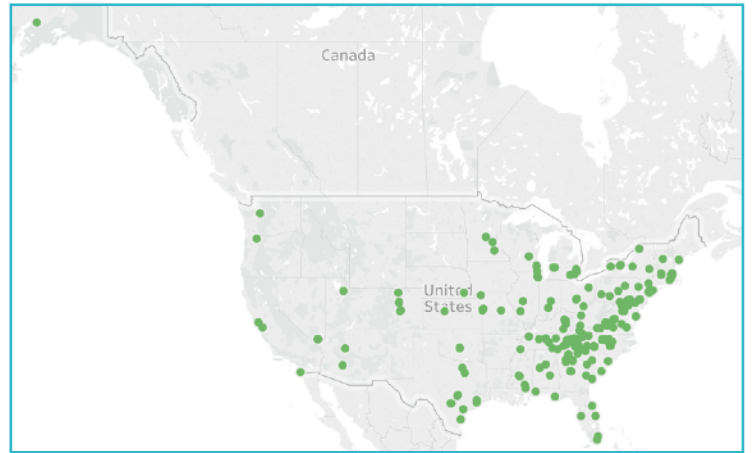
<http://www.thelibrarycollective.org>





# WHERE WE CAME FROM

Participants hailed from 6 countries (US, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Kenya, and Costa Rica) and 40 US states, representing more than 200 different organizations.



This year we hosted several Kenyan librarians as the first part of a multi-year professional exchange program, *The Exchange*. The Kenyan team attended *The Collective* with the ultimate intention of being able to host a similarly structured event in Kenya within a few years.





## 2020 THEME & PLENARY

This year's theme was inspired by an iconic Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) phrase: roll for initiative. We chose *Roll for Initiative* to invoke ideas connected to storytelling, improvisation, role-playing, innovation, creativity, empathy-building, and the other ways folks are taking initiatives in their libraries.

In this spirit, the participants of 2020 Collective were a wonderfully eclectic combination of D&D enthusiasts, novices, and abstainers. We used the *Roll for Initiative* theme as a launching point for hands-on workshops and interactive conversations where we pushed ourselves to learn new ways to clean data, brainstorm new evaluation processes, redesign information literacy instruction, and more. Our 2020 program was also agile: due to early COVID-19 concerns and cancellations, we rapidly reorganized the schedule and even offered on-the-fly sessions to address emergent participant professional needs, including a shift to teaching and working online.







After welcomes, a Dolly Parton-themed hand washing tutorial, and COVID-19 safety updates, our 2020 interactive plenary kicked off with a team-based networking event called Fantasy Grudge Match. Essentially, this activity was a mash-up of team-building and performance where aspects of D&D met Project Runway met Wrestlemania!

Each team created a character, complete with a fabulous costume and detailed back-story. Characters then faced off against another team's creation in a live "smack-talking" improvised skit. Underlying the silliness and fun were opportunities to exercise our capacity for creative risk-taking, accepting ambiguity, coping with the unknown, improvisation, design-thinking, rapid prototyping, developing user personas, and even practice dealing with embarrassment (which has been shown to increase creativity). It was a joyful morning.



Our responsive and carefully designed programming engenders an inclusive and positive event culture to help everyone feel welcome, comfortable, and safe.

Full schedule: <https://thecollective2020.sched.com>

# *idea* LIBRARY TINKER LAB

## ALTERNATIVE CONFERENCE SPACES

To encourage informal networking and collaboration, our meeting space once again featured pop-up “unconference” spaces:

**IdeaLibrary:** a space for impromptu brainstorming, networking, and discussion with books, board games, and a postcard mailing station!

**TinkerLab:** a mobile maker-space with tools and kits for hands-on exploration and demos of DIY electronic tinkering, media production, and making, including miniature painting, green screen video/photo booth, button machines, a Cricut Maker, and much more!

**Shhh Room:** a phone and tech-free space dedicated to quiet reflection; equipped with yoga mats and meditative coloring books.

# Shhh Room



Library Hand

**Library Hand:** a little pop-up shop featuring the best library swag around, including our custom bandanas and enamel pins!









## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & NETWORKING

The night before the conference, over 100 participants took part in “dine arounds,” an easy way to dine well in Knoxville and get to know fellow attendees. Volunteer hosts arranged reservations at nearby restaurants around Market Square and facilitated a 15 Toasts activity during dinner.

Opening night, everyone was invited to a complimentary D&D themed reception/dance party at *The Standard* in downtown Knoxville, complete with a large inflated dragon. Participants enjoyed themed cocktails, a catered dinner from Rickard Ridge BBQ, and Magpies cakes.



Closing night, we gathered upstairs at Maple Hall in downtown Knoxville to celebrate the winning teams of the closing GooseChase scavenger hunt.



# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Every year we poll participants through a formal survey during the conference. **95% of participants would attend a Collective gathering again**, and here's some of what the surveys said:

“It’s the best conference with the best librarians. I LOVE the librarians who attend this conference. I learn so much and can let my freak flag fly.”

“It’s dang fun.”

“It was awesome! I learned so much and met so many awesome people and it was fun and not stuffy or formal.”

“The experience is simply awesome!”

“The people are fantastic, the sessions are fantastic, and the swag was amazing! I had so much more fun than I expected, and I learned a lot about not only librarianship but also skills really useful to me outside of my job that I can carry into grad school!”

“This is my second year. The people are so great. The activities are inspiring, fun, and I love all the laughter.”

“Anti-elitist ideology!”

“It’s such an innovative take on library conferences; it’s fun and useful. I feel like I’ve found my people.”

“It’s amazing, so much playfulness and joy, while also building camaraderie and learning real practical things to try in my library. Best library conference ever!”

“I’ve been three times, can’t stop now.”



“The flow of this conference is superior to most. It is a relaxed atmosphere filled with excellent hands on learning. The mentally exhausting, socially overwhelming atmosphere of larger conferences is not present here.”

**“It’s a breath of fresh air.”**

“Loved the theme, tinker space, and the kind and inclusive presenters. In places like Tennessee being able to express my identity and see others doing the same in a professional environment was absolutely one of the most important things I’ve ever experienced.”

“I have attended more useful sessions at this conference than I have at all the conferences I have attended in my 3 years as a professional combined.”

“I like that we can have pretty casual conversations about radical topics in a way that we can’t always in professional settings.”

**“Failure Confessions reminds me of what it means to be human.”**

“The plenary was freaking inspired. I was absolutely awed by the fun and creativity in which people dove in – at 9 o’clock in the morning too! THE THEME! I work on gaming and I always feel like nobody understands what I do! Thank you for centering this great part of important pop culture that we can all bond around.”

“This is the place where I feel most connected to and happy about being a librarian. I can be me here. It is awesome.”

“I needed something different that was creative AND practical. You delivered beyond my expectations. I’ll be here every year from now on.”

**“I return each year exhausted and rejuvenated.”**

“It’s amazing, so much playfulness and joy, while also building camaraderie and learning real practical things to try in my library. Best library conference ever!”

“I don’t think I’ve ever met a nicer, more excited group to be part of – I can’t wait to hear more about next year!”

“This was the best conference I have been to. The topics are relevant, the sessions are instructive, and everything is FUN!”

“I love the practicality of the event – I always come away with ideas even if it’s not directly applicable on a one-to-one transfer to my library environment.”

**“I felt so comfortable and so safe.”**

“I wanted a conference that focused on useful skills and meeting fellow library professionals, and The Collective delivered that.”

**“The atmosphere and friendliness of participants was amazing.”**

“The sessions were really interesting and I LOVE that we all had fun and got to interact and just talk to each other. So many events don’t make time for any meaningful interaction.”

**“I stumbled in blindly but will come back intentionally.”**



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