

Engaging young people with digital: North Yorkshire

ECODE

Funding from the Essential Life Skills Fund enabled Scarborough Library to join with Invisible Dust, an award-winning art, science and environmental charity and Arts Council NPO, who work with leading artists and scientists to produce unique and exciting projects exploring scientific ideas to engage audiences and raise awareness of environmental concerns.

ECODE was an extra-curricular digital project at Scarborough Library, running from September 2018 to July 2019 which aimed to introduce young people to digital skills beyond the classroom, support them to communicate ideas and raise awareness of career pathways in the digital sector.

Children aged 8-13 visited outdoor conservation environments (Scarborough beach, and Raincliffe Woods) for hands-on sessions with scientists, artists and local nature groups to inspire them to engage with their surroundings. They then worked with digital experts, artists and young volunteers to learn coding skills which could be applied to digital platforms using resources at Scarborough Library.

As well as learning new STEAM and transferrable team working skills, the participants were inspired to take an interest in their local environment, develop critical thinking skills and were supported to communicate their ideas to their peers at a Youth Voice conference and to the wider public at Scarborough's SeaFest. They hopefully also became more aware of wider career options in creative and digital fields.

We are looking to develop similar projects at other library locations across the county using the skills we developed through working with Invisible Dust.

A video of phase one of the project is available here <https://vimeo.com/357309320>

VR and Digital Makey

As part of an internal 'Dragon's Den' competition, the West Team put together a successful bid to purchase Virtual Reality (VR) equipment for use in libraries across North Yorkshire.

Using the Library Innovation Network, they sought guidance on equipment and how best to use it and developed a programme of activities to make use of the VR equipment. They held two VR events in Skipton Library in partnership with the BBC VR Hub, gaining useful experience and establishing that there was an appetite for this kind of activity in libraries. Having honed their skills, they took the VR equipment to Harrogate and, using this with existing Raspberry Pi, Micro:Bits, Makey Makeys, and Lego Robots, they ran North Yorkshire's first pop-up Makerspace.

They had lots of activities running throughout the day aimed mainly at attracting a new teenage audience and challenging their perception of libraries, and to promote STEM activities outside the school environment.

We have gone on to purchase more VR headsets (Oculus Rift and Oculus Go's) and are using apps such as *Tilt Brush*, *The Lab* and *Google Earth VR* with audiences of all ages.

Animation

Many of our libraries have run sessions on stop motion animation, bringing in skilled practitioners such as Aardman Animation's, Virpi Kettu

Most recently, in August 2019, Nidderdale Plus Library facilitated the delivery of an Intergeneration digital stop frame animation project to increase digital skills, break down barriers between generations and explore key themes for local residents.

There were six, two-hour workshop sessions involving a wide range of participants; three young students, four staff and volunteers linked to the library; interviews with six shopkeepers from the High Street and two local residents (including some retired people).

The films can be viewed here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f53qtdj9upk3fd9/AADkW7droEPjdOnZevggk73Ra?dl=0>

You can also view all of the films as one final piece here: <https://youtu.be/PN8NwWWCafc>

The young participants, aged 12, 14 and 16, enjoyed brainstorming themes, particularly concentrating on transport, businesses, tourism, rural isolation and community, and approached these themes through the workshops in different ways to create individual animations.

A group of creative young people with animation skills has now been established in Nidderdale and is keen to share its voice and ideas with the wider community.

Animation has proved popular in North Yorkshire and a new stop motion animation club is starting at Easingwold Community Library for children to direct and create their own films: <https://easingwoldcommunitylibrary.com/stop-motion-movie-club/>

Body image

After attending an event at Ripon Library, with Laura Steven, author of 'Exact Opposite of Ok', girls from a local school were invited back to the library to take part in an activity looking at body image as part of Mental Health Awareness Week. Following engaging and energised discussions covering body image, internet safety and how relationships are portrayed in the media, the group used library resources to produce digital artwork exploring identity, self-esteem and what they liked about themselves and each other. The young people left with a renewed sense of confidence in their 'uniqueness'.