Round Table 3: Digital Literacy

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Summary

* Library services vary greatly in how much STEAM programming they are delivering. Some have none (or are just starting out), whereas some have a range of technologies and are delivering multiple programs on a regular or semi-regular basis.
  + Nonetheless this is seen as popular and worthwhile trend
* Our discussions focussed on the delivery of STEAM programs related to science, coding and robotics, rather than basic digital literacy (eg how to use a computer)
  + However, some of us have met young people who are “tech savvy” with touch screens, but who lack basic PC skills (such as using a mouse, QWERTY layout, file structure etc)
  + Basic computer skills are still required when learning text-based coding
* At what age shall we start encouraging digital literacy? This intersects with anxieties about too much screentime for young children. Should we focus more on physical books and reading literacy for the Under 5s?
* Staff and staffing is commonly seen as a big factor / challenge in the successful rollout of STEAM programming
  + The time and mental load required to train existing staff in new technologies
  + Overcoming any nervousness in staff who have a humanities background, and who don’t currently see themselves as “techy”
  + A possible solution is to recruit skilled volunteers to assist in STEAM programming. However, some councils / libraries have Volunteer Policies that limit the scope of what volunteers can do
  + Another possible option is to hire specialist programming staff with STEAM expertise
* How does STEAM programming fit into our libraries’ strategic intent?
* Some low-tech STEAM programming ideas (especially for those who don’t have high-tech equipment just yet):
  + CS unplugged <https://csunplugged.org/en/> uses physical games to teach basic computer science concepts
  + Physical sciences (chemistry, biology, physics etc) can be discussed through sensory play, nature play and kitchen science activities
  + Many arts and crafts are underpinned by STEAM concepts (eg origami)