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Metaphors of Privilege

Public Library Makerspace Rhetoric

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INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are maps

As more public libraries add "makerspace" to the list of services they offer, the professional conversation about such spaces hones in on advanced technological gadgets and creation. Articles and blogposts often brush past more traditional ways of making, such as fiber crafts or painting, to emphasize digitally-mediated creativity. Public librarians describe translating their past activities into more high-tech services, and reframing their commitments to creative programming. The metaphors journalists and practitioners use in deliberating these transformations provide a path for others to follow.

LITERATURE

Anthony Giddens & Michel du Certeau

- Metaphors act as roadmaps that shape and enable future movement by projecting synthesized past experiences (i.e. "makerspaces are like kitchens") onto future expectations in a type of time-space distanciation (Fernandez, 1986, p. 45; Giddens, 1984, p. 171).
- Library and Information Science (LIS) scholars have regularly utilized metaphor as an analytic tool (e.g. Bouthillier, 2000; Markham, 2005; Van Acker, Uyttenhove, & Van Peteghem, 2014; Vanscoy, 2014).
- Strategies: The ways in which institutions reproduce themselves, based in "proper" spaces that hold authority by virtue of their historical and totalizing logics (Certeau, 1984).
- Tactics: The ad hoc arrangements, rule-bending, hacking, and subverting activities that people do within and around institutions (Certeau, 1984).

METHODS

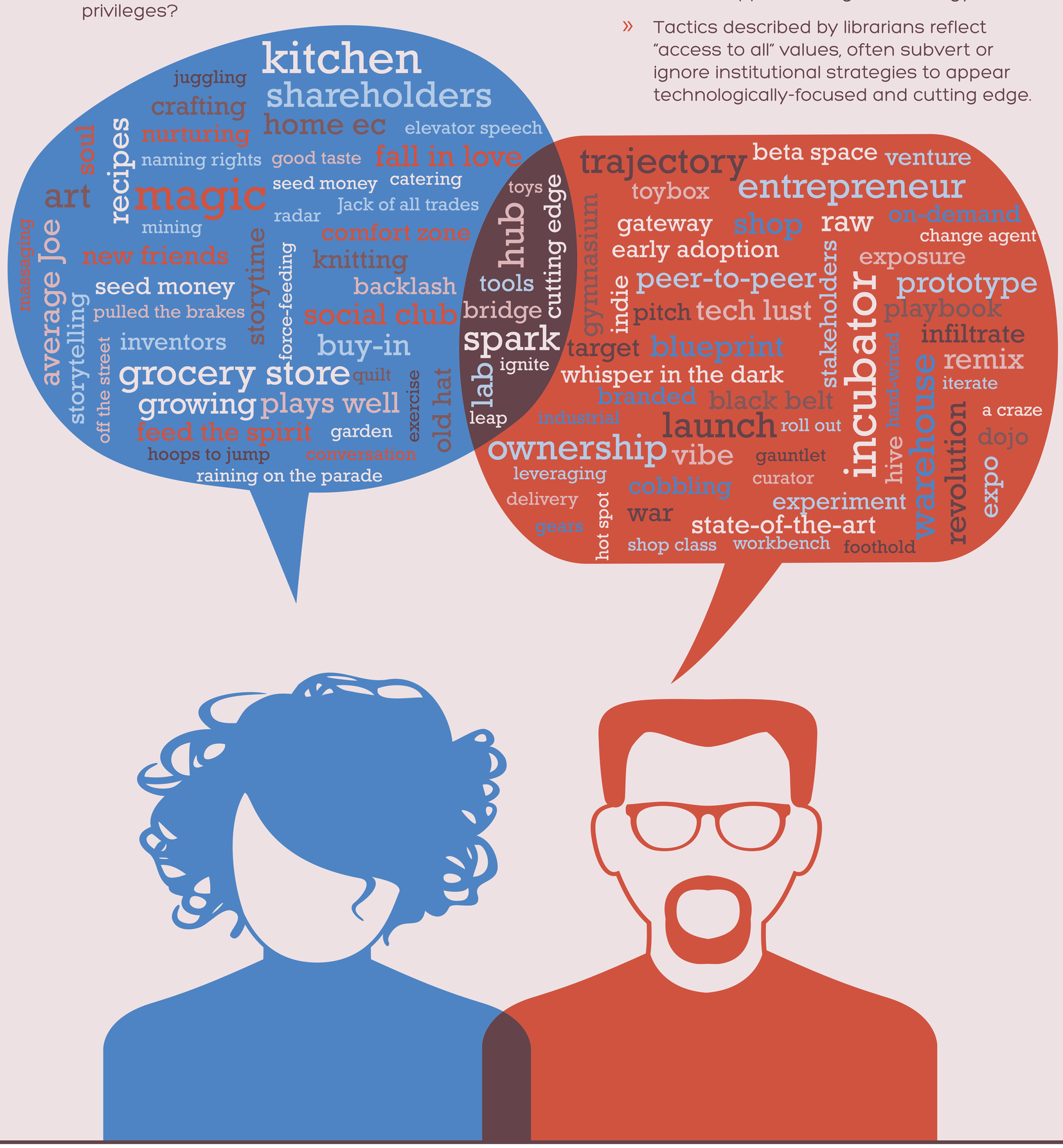
Interviews & Critical Discourse Analysis

- 14 Librarians in a variety of public libraries
- 14 blogs, magazine articles, multimedia transcripts
- Critical discourse analysis

PROBLEM

What are the metaphors? Do they differ?

- What metaphors and metanyms do different groups mobilize in describing library makerspaces, their users, and their practices?
- What strategies and tactics are described by librarians? By funders? By reporters?
- Do these reveal or embody values or privileges?



RESULTS

Makerspace rhetoric privileges particular groups and types of making

- Males, teens, and children served & highly technological making prioritized in literature.
- "Stakeholders" versus "shareholders"
- Metaphors reveal strategic choices to reinforce institutional goals: Literacy, learning, career support through technology.
- Tactics described by librarians reflect "access to all" values, often subvert or ignore institutional strategies to appear technologically-focused and cutting edge.

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REFERENCES & ABSTRACT

For a complete list of references and a detailed abstract, please go to http://wp.me/p1HaRj-gL