IDEAS FOR DIGITAL FUN PALACES

Fun Palaces Maker and advocate, Lorena Hodgson has brought together loads of brilliant digital ideas for us to share.

Lorena has been in IT for over 30 years and uses some of these ideas on a daily basis to run Red Barn Creative, a creative curator/producer organisation making arts and heritage projects with community at their core. Lorena also writes a lot of lists of interesting things to try, so some of these are untested, but look like fun!

Have a go, start a Tiny (digital) Revolution from your home. Learn new skills, pass them on...

Whether you're on your own, or with a friend or your family; whether you're in touch with local people or not, you can still create a Fun Palace. You can find your community in many places, without leaving your home. You can also find a community of like-minded people online, they may be local, or across the world.

You can still do the same demonstration or show your random skill, that you would have taken to a Fun Palace, but in your home – and then use some of these tools to record and share publicly, or to specific groups on social media.

Suggestion: Using Twitter, search for @FunPalaces see who they follow, and follow those people that interest you too. Then see who follows them and follow the interesting sounding ones. Be broad in your choices, you can always unfollow.

Also look for museums, art galleries, libraries and other public places as they've been busy producing online content for lockdown, so you'll get plenty of ideas there. This will give you some interesting ideas and links to follow.

Make a poster to put in your window to advertise your Fun Palace. Once you've registered your Fun Palace, you can get some ready-made posters here but if you want to create your own, and also make banners for Facebook and posts for Twitter and Instagram, you can use Canva. It comes with a short tutorial on design and tons of elements and templates to start you off. You can upload your own work too.

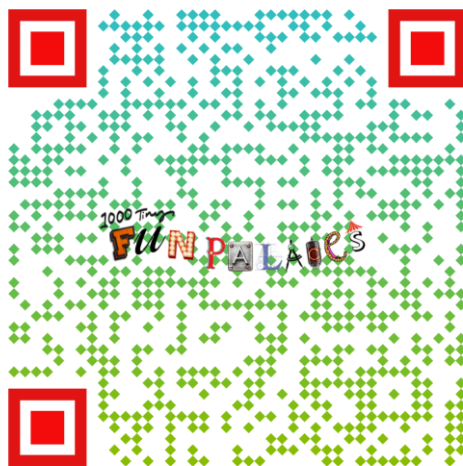To edit photos etc then a serious editor is GIMP – it's like Photoshop, but free! InkScape is the open source (freely available) equivalent to InDesign.

Maybe get together with a few people online, maybe those you met via a Mutual Aid group in your neighbourhood, and set up a trail for those on their daily walks?
You could all create a QR code to put in your window and create messages or send to a website. https://www.the-qrcode-generator.com/ creates the codes. You can print them off and put them in your window, see who comes by to check them out. Or how about printing them as an embroidery, crochet or knitting pattern?

For adding fun colours and your own logo, try https://www.qrcode-monkey.com

For those who can get out and about, perhaps create a tour of your streets? Promote it on your local group sites or create a QR code for people to discover as they walk around.

Geocaching it was one of the first things I tried on the internet. The idea is to hide a small cache (usually a mini plastic box) and give clues to finding it online, involving GPS equipment. Go to their website https://www.geocaching.com/play for more info and to register.

Thanks to the Heritage Open Days team for the next two …

We haven't tried this yet, but here's a link to create a quest!

https://academy.izi.travel/help/production/how-to-create-a-quest/

How about creating a virtual escape room in Google Docs? Here's a YouTube video explaining:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLzbPGF4TzY

There is the game Pokemon Go, which encourages you to walk about catching virtual creatures, and there's a Jurassic World version too. (Find them on Google Play.) Take the whole family out and take photos of your creatures and post online and share with others walking by.

Minecraft is a favourite for digital connections. Here's an explanation of how it has been used in Museums, including words from Adam Clarke, the master of creating worlds for inquisitive people to play in and learn from.

https://www.museumnext.com/article/minecrafting-the-museum/

Parents, ask your children to explain Minecraft, and see if they can teach you how to play. Perhaps there's other parents that you only bump into at the school gates who you could challenge – build your house, build your grandparents' house! (See Adam's book Minecraft Life Hacks Lab for Kids for more ideas.)
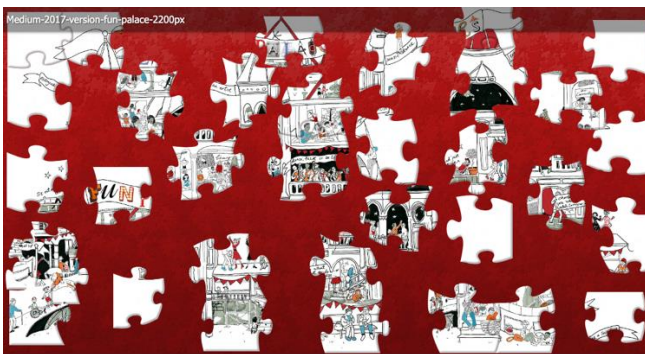

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Adam taught me how to put a photo in a Minecraft map. I added some artwork and a QR code to the page on the website where the art is. I am very pleased with myself!

Create a puzzle of a favourite photograph and share with friends and family – challenge them to do the big version. https://www.jigsawplanet.com

Here's a link to Fun Palaces logo puzzle:

https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=349beb479400

Find Google Arts and Culture in your phone's app store. Create new works of art from your photos, in the style of various artists – send them to your friends, see if they recognise the original photo.

Here's a useful set of videos if you're thinking more seriously about producing something online to livestream to your local groups, neighbours, or friend down the road who's shielding: https://weareunlimited.org.uk/want-to-know-more-about-live-streaming/

Connecting to others online is possible through other channels rather than just the usual social media. Discord is a great tool for communication like messaging, but it's also good for video chats and sharing silly gifs! Used mainly by gamers, Discord is keen to share its fun and easy to use tools with everyone, have a look www.discord.gg (gg = "good game" a message sent to others when playing networked games) There are public servers that you can join to find like-minded people, or set up your own to link friends and family – like a cooler WhatsApp with more tools.

Some business tools could be used for playful connecting with others:

A presentation tool, Mentimeter allows for quizzes, slides etc and the audience can respond via their smartphones – responses are visually represented in real time. Use in conjunction with screensharing – eg during a Zoom or Discord video chat.

https://www.mentimeter.com/

https://www.polleverywhere.com/ is a similar service

https://www.sli.do/ allows audience participation, so again, you can run something online and get people to join in!

Hopefully this has given you some ideas to make connections online and share your passions and skills while perhaps learning something new yourself.

Connecting with others online can be a lot more rewarding than you might think, and you can find far more people to become friends with than you might expect. I'm still friends with people I met online almost 20 years ago, and I still haven't met most of them face to face.

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