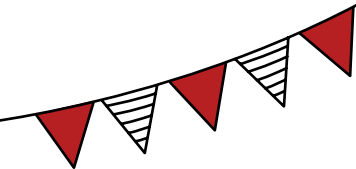




Fun Palaces in Libraries

A how-to guide



Introduction

Fun Palaces can happen anywhere:

They've happened at allotments, in community centres, museums, schools, housing estates, shopping centres, theatres, swimming pools, and of course in libraries.

In 2021 there were 223 Fun Palaces in over 400 venues. They were made by 2400 people (Fun Palace Makers) and attended by 68,500 participants (28K in person, 40.5K online). 50% of these Fun Palaces (111 in total) took place in libraries: from St Ives to Stirling, up and down the UK and beyond, both online and offline.



Libraries are brilliant venues for Fun Palaces, due to their existing links with the local community and connections with local organisations.

In this booklet is everything you need to know about Fun Palaces, how to make a Fun Palace in your library and how you can hand it over to your local community to make your load a little lighter.

The Fun Palaces Weekend of Celebration takes place on the first weekend of October each year, and we would love you to make your Fun Palace then. It can be long or short - anything from an hour or two to a whole weekend. You can make your Fun Palace happen at other times of year too, but whenever it happens, make sure you log onto the Fun Palaces website to register your Fun Palace and get on the map. Registrations open in the spring, so join our mailing list to be the first to hear.

Contents:

- 04. What are Fun Palaces?**
- 09. Fun Palaces in Libraries**
- 12. Handing Over**
- 14. Timeline**
- 16. Last Minute Fun Palaces**
- 17. Top Tips**
- 20. Marketing Your Fun Palace**
- 22. Useful links and resources**

If you have any questions, want to know more or talk through ideas for your Fun Palace with a member of the team, then drop us an email: hello@funpalaces.co.uk or call the office phone and leave a message: **0208 692 4446, ext 203.**





What are Fun Palaces?

Fun Palaces supports local people to co-create their own cultural and community events, across the UK and worldwide, sharing and celebrating the genius in everyone. Fun Palaces is both an annual weekend of celebration and an ongoing campaign.

The weekend of celebration involves local people sharing skills, connecting communities and creating tiny revolutions. It takes place on the first weekend of October every year.

The ongoing campaign champions community at the heart of culture and culture at the heart of community.

Our workshops and our Ambassadors Programme support communities to create by and for themselves; developing local networks, linking individuals and organisations, encouraging venues to co-create with local people, and helping small groups to shout about their value as grassroots community activists.



Fun Palaces Vision

A world where communities have an active role in culture, where everyone's brilliance is recognised and valued, where people create, connect, learn and have fun, where communities have what they need to be active and equal leaders and collaborators.

Fun Palaces Aims

- To change how we all see and fund culture so that the culture made and enjoyed by all communities counts.
- To make the most of all talents, spaces, local and national strengths, and assets, so that we live in a culturally richer and fairer world.
- To encourage creativity and connection so that we have vibrant, confident, and strong communities.

Fun Palaces Objectives

- To celebrate, value, and amplify the culture in local communities through year-round campaign work and our weekend of celebration.
- To support venues and institutions to hand over decision-making to communities and to share resources (e.g. spaces and funds) for community and sector benefit. We achieve this through working with hosts, ambassadors and venues for community-led takeovers and supporting with workshops and toolkits.
- To connect people, venues, and places to share learning and collaborate through our ambassadors programme, workshops, networking opportunities, and action research.
- To inspire, equip and support communities to create, explore, and take the lead through our case studies, toolkits, workshops, and network.



Fun Palaces are:

Free:

Free to enter, free to take part.

Local:

A Fun Palace is by local people for local people - perhaps a group of neighbours, a residents' association or friends getting together. If you are a venue, building or organisation, 'local' might mean your staff, the cleaners and businesses nearby. It also means those who live close but never visit, because they don't think your space is for them. If you're making a Fun Palace, we'd say don't 'deliver' an event for those people hoping they will come, instead hand your space over and let them decide what happens. Pretty soon they'll feel they own it.

For all ages:

It's often easier to think up activities for children, but what about the 17-year-old who doesn't consider themselves a child or the 75-year-old who never gets to play? Can we make Fun Palaces for everyone? We welcome children and young people as Makers in their own right.

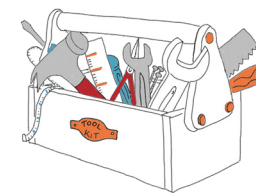


Inclusive:

Most Fun Palaces are made with little or no budget, and even the smallest effort can help. Can you make sure your signs are easy to read? Consider access for wheelchair users? Are there groups in your local community you can invite to take part, who can share their own cultural interests? Thinking outside your usual circle can make a massive difference.

Hands-on:

Fun Palaces are about joining in with whatever your version of "culture" may be. Arts, science, craft, tech, digital, heritage, sports: whatever brings people together. We had this feedback from South Elmsall Library's 2016 Fun Palace: *"I've met a young girl today who I've never spoken to before and she lives on my street, through chatting I've found out her Grandma was my best friend at school."* Doing something together gave them a chance to talk.



Process as much as product:

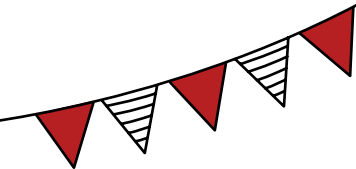
Of course the weekend event matters, but the real Fun Palace is what you and your community do to make it happen, the meetings, the cups of tea, the organising, the conversations. It's the thinking and the linking that count.

Yours:

We don't know where you live, your workplace, or your local community. You do. You know how to make YOUR local Fun Palace. If you want some help get in touch, we might know someone who's done something similar – it can be useful to speak to a fellow Maker and we can make those links.

Part of a Campaign:

What you do locally will be influenced by your area and your Fun Palace is part of a worldwide shout for access and inclusion for and with everyone.



A Fun Palace IS NOT:

A fête or an Open Day:

Whether you are making a Fun Palace in a building, in a community group or as an individual, part of the role is to help other people understand that they too can make a Fun Palace, they too can feel ownership of your library, museum, school, gallery, shop, town square, football pitch ...

A community arts project or sci-comm:

It's both and neither. We encourage people to share their skills, hobbies, enthusiasms as well as their professional abilities in culture, science or sport. This way we support many more people to join in and to create with our own local communities.

(ordinary) Facepainting:

Fun Palaces are about turning the ordinary upside down – so let the kids paint the adults' faces. Brixton Library's 2015 Fun Palace showed everyone how to paint their own bones, muscles and veins on their skin – learning about the body and being artists at the same time. (See also balloon modelling, bunting, fairy cakes – can you take an ordinary activity and make something totally new by and for YOUR community?)



Fun Palaces in Libraries



"I didn't know what would come out of our first Fun Palaces weekend, but so many good things did come out of it and many more have since then."

Miriam Storey, Library Manager, Eltham.

Libraries are a perfect venue for Fun Palaces to take place in, due to their existing links with the local community and connections with local organisations.



What should happen at our library's Fun Palace?

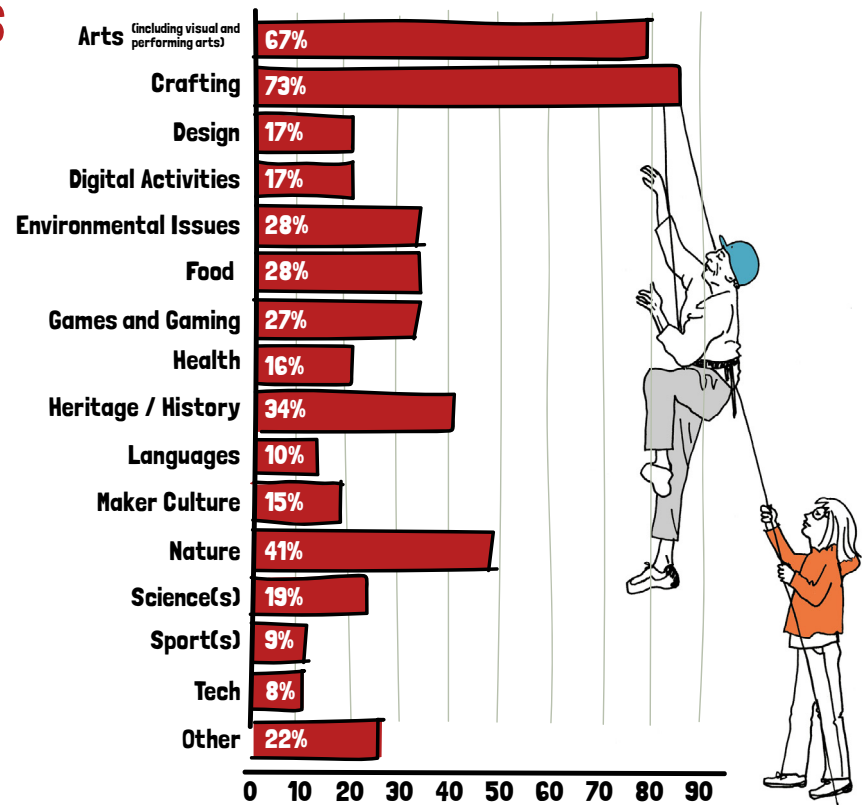
The answer is, whatever you want to happen, and more importantly, whatever your local community wants to happen in their library. There is no right or wrong way for a Fun Palace to look.

"In the library I was working in, we used every single inch of space, we had boxing happening in one corner, someone teaching people how to make pasta in another corner, we had people teaching illustration in another corner. Then there was Tai Chi which was next to the boxing. And someone teaching people how to make perfume."

Caroline, Library Manager



In 2021 activities in Fun Palaces included:



Some of those activities were:

PILATES FIDDLE PLAYING **COMPUTER BREAKING**
GAMING **ZINE MAKING** LOCAL HISTORY
 ORANGE PEEL ART **BATTLE RAP** **CHAPATIS** PAINTING
SKITTLE EXPERIMENTS BUSHCRAFT **PHOTOGRAPHY**
CODING ENTOMOLOGY **COMMUNITY ARCHEOLOGY**
STORYTELLING **WINDOW DECORATING** RECIPE SHARING
GARDENING DANCING **WILD WEAVING** EDIBLE SCULPTING
SINGING LANGUAGE LEARNING K'NEX BUILDING POETRY
 DRAWING **YOGA** **PSYCHOLOGY** **EXPLORING**
LAUGHING SEED SWAPPING PUPPETRY MATHS
 FILM MAKING **CURATING** **BINARY KEYMAKING**
ORIGAMI RECYCLING **CYANOTYPE PRINTING**
ZOETROPE **TIE DYING** SKATING SAND ART



Your Fun Palace may have some similar activities happening, or something completely different, and that is absolutely fine!

Handing Over

You and your colleagues may be keen to run events at your Fun Palace, and that's great. You might also want to spend some time thinking how to hand over to your local community to make less work for yourself. By inviting community members to come and run activities at the Fun Palace, you'll hopefully lighten your load and make things a little easier.

"The thing that's been useful for me, as a non-librarian, is that the library have connected us to their volunteers, staff, the friends of Lancaster library group, and all of them have been involved in different ways, it's been a really exciting relationship for us to develop and it's been great for Fun Palaces."

Emma Rucastle, Fun Palaces Maker, Lancaster Library.



Practical ideas for handing over:

- Building connections with your local community may be something to start thinking about earlier in the year, ahead of making your Fun Palace. April or May might be a good time to start meeting people and finding out what they can bring in October. (We've suggested a timeline on p14-15). That said, some of the best Fun Palaces are made last minute, so don't worry if you don't manage to get cracking that early on in the year. If you sign up to our newsletter you will receive lots of support and guidance on making last-minute Fun Palaces.



- Hold a skills swap workshop. Invite people to bring along a skill or hobby to share - kind of like a mini Fun Palace earlier on in the year. They could bring anything from knitting, to yoga, to cocktail making, to a sport or martial art, to a talk on something they are an expert in.
- Create a skills share sign-up sheet. Have a sign up sheet in your library where people can share their name, email address (or phone number) and skill that they could share with the local community. We also have a poster on our website you can print that does exactly this!



- Chat to existing community groups using the library. Ask groups already meeting in the library to get involved, whether it's a knit and natter session, or the parents that attend story time - ask them if they have a skill they'd like to bring and share.
- Use the Fun Palaces skills sharing postcards. You could create a letter box in your library for people to post them into - this would be a great way to find Makers.

E-mail hello@funpalaces.co.uk to order yours for free.





Timeline

“One of the first things we had to do was teach everyone at our library what a Fun Palace is and what it isn’t”

Zoey Dixon, Librarian, Brixton Library.

There is no right or wrong time to start planning your Fun Palace ahead of the weekend in October. In theory you could decide to hold a Fun Palace the night before and throw it together on the morning, and it would be just as valid as one that had been in the making for a year. However, for library staff, there can be a lot going on in the calendar, and August (just a couple of months before the weekend) can be an especially busy time due to the school holidays. Here is a suggested timeline for making a Fun Palace at your library, getting the bulk of the work out of the way before the busy summer period.

March

Initial meeting within library, inviting staff and volunteers. Sharing what a Fun Palace is and what happens. (We have a video in the libraries section of our website that will do all this for you. This booklet is also available on our website as a PDF).



April

Hold a Fun Palaces meeting for the local community and library staff, invite anyone who wants to come, and see what skills people may bring to share at the Fun Palace. This gives you plenty of time ahead of the Fun Palace to get to know your Makers and for them to get thinking and planning.



May

Visit www.funpalaces.co.uk to register your Fun Palace. By putting your Fun Palace on the map on our website, it allows community members to find you.



July

Hold a follow-up meeting with community members and library staff (new ones welcome too), check in with everyone, see if any new ideas for activities have arisen.

NOTE: Around now keep an eye out for weekly workshops taking place from late summer onwards, led by the Fun Palaces HQ Team, Ambassadors and Makers. These will be announced on the Fun Palaces website and social media.

September

Logistics meeting - a final meeting ahead of the Fun Palace to organise timetables and logistics. (Don't forget to share your timetable on your Fun Palaces page on our website.)



October

Fun Palaces weekend!
Have fun!



Last Minute Fun Palaces

If you are picking this booklet up in September and thinking 'Oh no, I've left it too late!', the good news is, you haven't! Every year dozens of Fun Palaces sign up in the final few weeks (and even the day before!) leading up to the weekend.

The best advice if you're working to a shorter timeline is keep it small, perhaps try to work with people you already know be it library staff, volunteers or groups already using the library. Just one or two things happening is still a Fun Palace - put out some posters, tie up some bunting (if you have some) and you're all set to go. Sometimes the best Fun Palaces are the more impromptu ones. There will also be a Fun Palaces workshop on how to make a last minute Fun Palace - come along! We're here to help.



"Sometimes the best Fun Palaces are the impromptu ones."

Top Tips



Here are some top tips from us, and some Library Makers to help you make your Fun Palace.

- Use your existing knowledge of customers to find potential Fun Palace Makers. Who has read all of the books on natural history and might be up for sharing their knowledge? Who often borrows cookery books and might be able to lead a hands-on cookery class? Ask them if they are interested in helping to make a Fun Palace.
- Get nosy with your customers; if you don't have existing knowledge of customers, find out a bit more about them, what their interests are, and if they'd be keen to get involved with your Fun Palace.



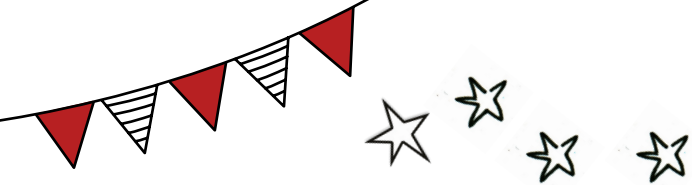
Hand over:

You don't have to do it all by yourself. By handing over your library as a Fun Palace to the local community, it means they bring the activities so your librarians don't have to.



"Say yes and work out the details later."

Miriam Storey, Library Manager, Eltham.



- Flip activities for kids on their head. Rather than doing the usual arts and crafts activities, **why not ask the kids to teach the adults something?**
- **Make connections with existing groups**, eg your local RSPB or swimming society may be keen to bring something along to your Fun Palace.
- **Start small.** If you're making your first Fun Palace, it doesn't have to be huge. Perhaps you'll have just two or three things happening in your library on Fun Palaces weekend, that's absolutely fine. Next year, once more people in your area know what a Fun Palace is, **you might find more people are keen to get involved, and it will naturally grow.**



- Use the **free posters we send to you** (on request) to let people know a Fun Palace is happening and to recruit Fun Palace Makers.
- Get in touch with the Fun Palaces HQ team, email hello@funpalaces.co.uk, we are always very happy to chat Fun Palaces, troubleshoot any problems or answer any questions you may have.



Marketing Your Fun Palace

There are numerous ways to market your Fun Palace in the lead-up before to ensure plenty of people turn up on the day.

Our top tip is also to make sure your Fun Palace is really easy to find - posters, direction arrows, chalk on the pavement outside, signs and banners will all help people find it, those who were looking for it, but hopefully those that had no idea about it too. Or why not take it even further and let the fun spill out of the building, with one or two activities taking place outside; this will be sure to generate some interest.

Here, Annie Smith from Dacorum Fun Palace shares her top tips for marketing your Fun Palace online.



Set up a Facebook page and boost* the event from about 3 weeks before the day.

In the 8 days leading up to Fun Palace I did a **post each day** on Facebook about each activity and the person/organisation delivering it, which always included the Fun Palace page URL each time.



I sent the organisations and artists (our co-creators) doing the sessions for our Fun Palace the Fun Palace logos and images to use on their own promotion. They also **shared my posts on their online platforms** about their sessions and about the Fun Palace in general.

I sent a **press release** out which was picked up by the local paper and other local online magazines and also BBC Three Counties Radio, which I went on at 8am on the morning of our FP, to talk about it. (There is a Press Release Template on the **Fun Palaces website**).



An email and image was sent to all the local schools to include in their parent **newsletters** and some shared it via their social media.

I sent information to the 2 companies who run the local shopping centres, who shared it on their social media, as part of their **community support work**.



This was all entirely free to do, apart from the Facebook boost (*when you boost a post, you pay for advertising, and Facebook advertise it to people in the local area).



Useful links and resources



Fun Palaces Libraries Section

If you head to the libraries section of our website, you'll find links, videos and the most up to date version of this brochure. <https://funpalaces.co.uk/makers-toolkit/resources/libraries/>

Fun Palaces Podcast

You can find the Fun Palaces podcast on Apple Music, or in the podcast section of our website. Although all episodes will give you an insight into Fun Palaces, there is a specific libraries episode designed to support Makers in libraries.

Fun Palaces Toolkit

There are loads of resources on the website to support you in making your Fun Palace: ideas for getting started, funding advice, posters and marketing materials, a PDF sharing ways in which you can make your Fun Palace more accessible and templates for writing to local press and council members. It's all in the toolkit section of the website.

Maker Stories:

If you head to the Maker Stories section of the Fun Palaces website, there are some stories from Fun Palace Makers in libraries, so you can see how others have done it. [Funpalaces.co.uk/news/maker-stories/](https://funpalaces.co.uk/news/maker-stories/)

Ambassadors

We currently have Ambassadors in Cornwall, Devon, Gateshead, Northern Ireland, Rotherham, Scotland, Sheffield and Wales. They are there to support Fun Palaces in those regions, so if you are located in an ambassador region, drop us an email and we will put you in touch.

HQ Team:

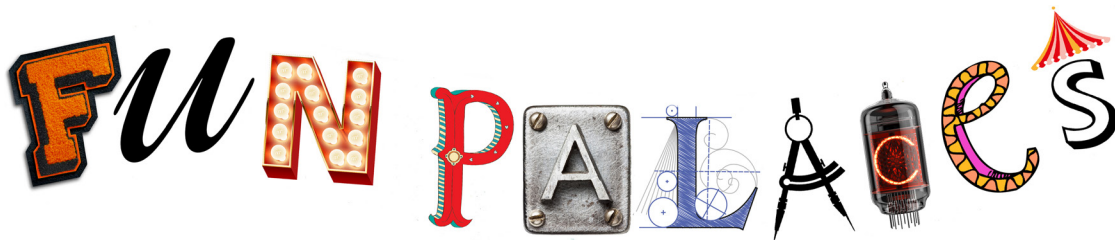
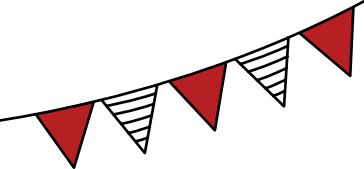
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**SHARING SKILLS, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES,
CREATING TINY REVOLUTIONS**

**WEEKEND OF CELEBRATION
1ST WEEKEND OF OCTOBER EVERY YEAR**

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