Thinkspace

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Young People Conquering New Media

Thinkspace is the Powerhouse Museum's digital learning precinct, offering creative digital media workshops and short courses designed to develop the creative and media production skills of young people. Through the *Thinkspace* lab environments, the Learning Technologies unit at the Powerhouse Museum provides a range of workshops and short courses to student groups, school teachers, adults undertaking continuing education, children and youth in school holiday activities, and groups of people with a disability.

People from agencies providing disability services visit weekly to participate in Thinkspace *SoundHouse* Special Access Kit programs. These music workshops utilise innovative music technologies such as the SoundHouse Special Access Kit and Banana keyboard. In 2009-10 94 workshops for people with a disability served 465 participants.

Links to Learning is a funding program from the Access and Equity unit of the NSW Department of Education and Training. Throughout NSW, a total of 95 projects are funded annually and currently 11 utilise a customised learning program offered at a discounted fee by Thinkspace. For almost all of the participants, the Thinkspace program represents their first ever visit to the Powerhouse, and for many it is their first visit to any museum, or for that matter, to central Sydney.

In the creative industries area, Thinkspace delivered a series of new *Digital Culture* programs in contemporary communication practices including podcasting and social media. Targeting cultural sector agencies, these workshops represented timely and valuable professional development training opportunities.

Sound It Out is a partnership between Thinkspace, the City of Sydney, and Redfern Community Centre. An after-school song-writing and demo recording workshop, the program attracts young people aged 10-14 years primarily from inner city youth centres. To date approximately 25 songs and three original music videos have been produced by participants. As well as building self-confidence and musical skills which has enabled participants to perform at local community events, songs have received prizes from the Australian Children's Music Foundation's annual song-writing completion.

A partnership between Thinkspace and the Australian Theatre for Young People to jointly promote and deliver school holiday acting and filming programs for young people has enhanced the quality of the performance elements within the short films created within the Media Mashup holiday program

In 2011 a new program direction which has proven extremely popular, particularly during school holidays, is computer programming workshops for kids using Scratch, a free educational software platform, to create 'multimedia' projects such as games and animations. As young people create and share Scratch projects, they learn important mathematical and computational ideas, while also learning to think creatively, reason systematically, and work collaboratively. Following a very successful trial program with teachers and learners from Ultimo Public School, Scratch has become a Thinkspace holiday program favourite.

Recently, the program offer has been further developed with the integration of LEGO systems such as WeDo. This introduction of LEGO bricks and motors, the operation of which is controlled by the Scratch program, extends the experience into building physical objects, thus achieving new kinds of knowledge creation, and novel and innovative links to Museum objects, collections and exhibitions

The Thinkspace *Special Access Kit* program continues to grow in popularity and sophistication. New technologies including tablet interfaces (iPads) have been successfully integrated in the repertoire and these have proven very engaging and encouraging to individuals whose disability impacts on their willingness or ability to participate.

Thinkspace was also an instrumental partner in hosting the Museum's first global TED event in 2010 taking responsibility for the video production aspects. TED, Technology Entertainment and Design, is a small non-profit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading, through www.ted.com, annual conferences, the annual TED Prize and local TEDx events. TEDX Youth @ Sydney took place in November and provided a platform for people aged 12 to 16 to present ideas about which they are passionate. The 14 talks were captured live on video and now represent the creativity and opinions of Australian youth on the TEDx YouTube channel

See: http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/thinkspace/