City Library opens new lab space

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'Collaboratory' to host coding workshops, tech help for all ages

North Vancouver City Library opened a new, hands-on community learning space this week that will host computer and technology instruction, robotics, coding and STEAM workshops for all ages.

The Collaboratory, constructed in an underused terrace space on the library's third floor, is a multimedia-equipped lab and learning space dedicated to innovative library programming and technology learning.

Until now, the library has lacked a dedicated space for technology-based programming — despite its critical community role in providing public technology access, said Library Board of Trustees Chair Leane Neufeld.

"We cannot wait to see the public animate the space when health guidelines allow," Neufeld said. "It is a space designed to inspire discovery and creation, a place for our community to gather and learn together."

The new lab is equipped with movable furniture and tech so the room can be configured in many ways to accommodate a variety of programming. The opening of the lab also frees up space elsewhere in the building for library and community use.

The City of North Vancouver supported and funded the project in their 2019 capital budget.

"Cultivating inclusive, accessible, and welcoming learning environments for children is crucial in building healthy communities. Families have struggled to find available programming at a cost they can afford. That's why I am so pleased to see this immersive community space for technology-based learning open its doors to all children in the City. The Collaboratory supports Council's vision of becoming a healthy city that works for everyone," said Mayor Linda Buchanan.

Equipment and software have been selected to support maximum flexibility and innovation in the Collaboratory. Adobe Creative Suite, CAD drawing software, and robotics and coding platforms complement the hands-on technology in the space. Device clinics, drop-in tech help and a slate of instructor-led computer and programming workshops are planned throughout the summer.

"The space is the jewel in the crown of the library building," Chief Librarian Deb Hutchison Koep said. "It creates opportunities to discover and explore emerging technology and access digital content creation tools — which can be quite cost-prohibitive."

Diamond Schmitt Architects worked with the City of North Vancouver project managers to ensure the new lab paid tribute to the North Shore. It was important to preserve the integrity of the building and its bright, open viewpoints with the addition while maintaining the library's LEED Gold designation,

Koep said.

There will be limited in-person programming in the Collaboratory due to current public health guidelines. For more information about upcoming programs and events in the Collaboratory, please visit our calendar.