

Call for Participation: Critical Making

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Figure 1: Four examples of data + craft

Are you hungry for a *year of Ludd* to put a lid on your scroll?¹ Do you want to make *enchanted things* or just plain practical things?² Feel like pressing pause on being a *cloud serf* with your attention and your data?³ Are you crafty, maybe even a *craftivist*?⁴ Join the Critical Making Community of Practice!

The Libraries and the Digital Humanities Initiative are launching a call for participation for a Critical Making Community of Practice in which participants hold informal gatherings this academic year that include presentations and demonstrations that encourage reflection on technology, society, and creative practice. A community of practice is premised on a social theory of learning in which “engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn...”⁵ Possible activities include zine making, letterpress printing, 3D modeling, physical computing, textile arts, ink making, and more. Bonus points for ties to other maker units and programs on campus like the Rutgers Makerspace, the Scarlet Letterpress, ScarletWell and Scarlet Arts Rx. All are welcome to contribute!

These events are intended to encourage members of the Rutgers community to experiment with creating intentional connections between body and mind. What happens to the way we learn when we bring all of ourselves

¹A variation on NYC’s “Summer of Ludd” festival in which participants were encouraged to get off big tech and into public space.

²Kari Kraus describes *enchanted things* as “hybrid physical-digital objects in the real world whose seemingly magical properties imbue them with the aura of enchantment” (Kraus, Kari. “The Care of Enchanted Things.” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.)

³According to Yanis Varoufakis (*Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*), almost all of us are “cloud serfs” in a technofeudal class system where we contribute our data to access Big Tech platforms.

⁴Many in the digital humanities sphere have refocused their activities on hands-on, socially engaged work rooted in community as an “antidote to doomscrolling” (Daedal, Quinn. “Craftivism in a Crisis: Making the Humanities Matter When It’s All Falling Apart” (blog). February 10, 2026. <https://quinndaedal.com/blog/2026/02/10/craftivism-crisis/>).

⁵Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

to the activity, including hands, eyes, ears, scent, and intellect? How does tinkering, prototyping, mending, and otherwise engaging our creative faculties deepen our understanding and promote better research?

We are seeking talks and demos/activities that will fill a one or one and a half hour time slot. Presenters are encouraged to reflect on these questions in their talks:

1. How does the technology, craft, or medium relate to your identity as a researcher/scholar/professional?
2. What do you see as the political or social stakes of your medium? An example could be an exploration of quipus as a window into indigenous and Western information systems or playing around with binary code to reflect on social binaries.
3. What can we learn about process (and patience) from the technology/craft?

In person or hybrid events may be held in the Digital Humanities Lab, room 406-407 of Alexander Library. If special equipment is required, we are open to hosting elsewhere on campus. Please submit your ideas in 100 words or less to Francesca Giannetti, Digital Humanities Librarian, at fgi62@rutgers.edu.

Supplies

We are also seeking donations of supplies to support our events. Please [consult our wishlist](#).

Scheduled Events

We will add more events based on the proposals we receive.

Botanical Dying & Black Wildcrafting
September 29, 2026, 2:00–3:30 p.m. [REGISTER](#)
Digital Humanities Lab
Facilitator: Tajah Ebram, Black Studies Librarian

During this hands-on workshop we will work with ink/dye made from botanicals growing right around us this fall. We will also talk a bit about U.S. Black cultural history and present of foraging, plant craft and land based knowing. This is a fully in-person workshop.

Bring a poem or passage that you might like to transcribe with your ink! Or an idea for an image to paint.

Data Visualization with Embroidery
October 15, 3:00–5:00 p.m. [REGISTER](#)
Digital Humanities Lab
Facilitator: Francesca Giannetti, Digital Humanities Librarian

What do wartime, espionage, and steganography have in common? Embroidery! Come for a brief history of data visualization in textiles and a hands-on activity in which we will learn to assemble and translate data into stitches. All levels of experience are welcome, including no experience at all. This is a hybrid workshop; materials will be provided to in person participants.

Zine Making Workshop
October 21, 3:30–5:00 p.m.
Digital Humanities Lab
Facilitator: Megan Lotts, Art Librarian

What's a zine: A zine (rhymes with "bean," short for "magazine") is a small, self-made booklet, hand-assembled, and bursting with personal voice. Think mini-magazine meets scrapbook meets creative outlet: no rules, no publisher, just you putting your ideas, art, and reflections onto paper.

You'll spend the session with Art Librarian Megan Lotts, taking a well-deserved creative pause from the workday. No artistic experience is needed. Just come ready to unwind, explore, read, and make something that's entirely your own. You'll leave with a handmade zine and a few new tools for weaving creativity and reflection into everyday life.

Edible Book Festival: Eat your words!

April 8, 2027

Pane Room, Alexander Library

Save the date! Partnership with Special Collections and University Archives and the Scarlet Letterpress.

Image credits

1. LJ Roberts, *The Queer Houses of Brooklyn in the Three Towns of Breukelen, Boswyck, and Midwout during the 41st Year of the Stonewall Era*, 2011, uses mapping and textiles, cited in *Queer Crafts: Material Practices and the Making of Identity*
2. Sophie Weinberg and Emma Irmisch, [feminist letterpress project](#) incorporating text from Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025
3. Pam Lach, Sleep Viz, models sleep data in embroidery stitches, cited in *Data Visualization with Textiles*
4. Celine Heck, [embroidered design](#) of her caffeinated beverage consumption for one week