

For the

Refashionista in your library

Bea Houston

In the article *Refashionistas are sew ahead of the pack*, Globe Style columnist Heidi Sopinka describes the growing trend of creating unique and original fashions out of bits and pieces of preloved clothes and fabric swatches: “Refashioning” or “Repurposing.” The gathering and sewing together of swatches to create something new and beautiful is a very do-it-yourself and crafty way of designing. Refashioning is eco-friendly, reinforces the idea that anyone can be a designer, and is quite popular with creative and fashionable young people today.

Crafting clothes is a perfect idea for original library programming. There are lots of simple projects that can be done by hand sewing together pieces of recycled fabric. Programs could also serve well as “Take-and-Makes” – library workshops can be used for brainstorming sessions, fabric swaps and pattern distribution so users can begin refashioning at the library and then take it home to finish on a sewing machine.



Later a fashion show or display program could be arranged to show off the projects.

If you don't have clothes at home that are safe to tear up and remake, take a trip to the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army, or Goodwill is a better bet than a thrift store because usually thrift stores sell items that have a vintage quality to them, whereas salvation army and goodwill items are mostly cast-offs.

Some things to grab:

- sweaters with interesting or colourful designs
- interesting scarves
- costume jewellery
- buttons, buttons and more buttons
- keep your eye out for sparkles, sequins, lace and other trims and embellishments, these are expensive to buy new!
- leggings and tights
- jeans to be made into skirts
- hilarious t-shirts can be made into halter tops
- men's dress shirts can be made into girl's dresses
- plain sneakers can be dyed and altered with appliqués or fabric paint
- interesting, unique fabrics in natural fibres

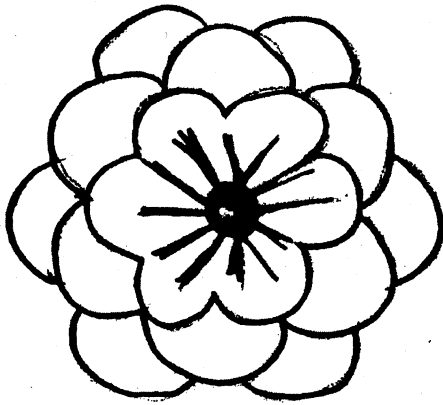
Read on for some beginner projects to try at your library!

Embellish a tote bag

This craft can easily be done with those canvas tote bags that are often sold by the library itself. Totes can be embellished with iron-ons, pockets, initials, buttons or fabric flowers.

Simple fabric flower

This is an easy no-sew project that can be done right in the library. With a button, some beautiful fabric and the simple template create a pretty embellishment for a purse or jacket. Instructions are available on the following website: http://blairpeter.typepad.com/weblog/2006/03/fabric_flowers.html



Easy clutch

Make a cute clutch out of an old scarf and a decorative brooch. This design can be hand-sewn or sewn on a machine, so it works for an in-library project or a take-and-make project. This project can be promoted around prom time when girls will want unique clutches to match their dresses. Try this website for instructions: <http://vintagebulletin.blogspot.com/2009/03/how-to-make-clutch-purse-out-of-scarf.html>

Other ideas

- ✓ Screen printing (see the “DIY Screenprinting” article on page 10 in this issue)
- ✓ T-shirt makeover. Favourite T-shirts can be repurposed in a seemingly endless amount of ways, from halter to hand-bag.
- ✓ Sweater arm warmers
- ✓ Headbands made from tights and decorated with appliqué.
- ✓ Skirts and dresses made from men’s dress shirts.
- ✓ Bags, purses and clutches made from recycled fabric.
- ✓ 80’s inspired belts made from recycled fabrics or tights.

Refashioning Resources

Burda Style Open Source Sewing: <http://www.burdastyle.com/>

This website is idea for library programmers searching for simple patterns for refashioning ideas. The recycled jeans handbag and envelope clutch are worth checking out. The patterns are accompanied by difficulty level rating.

CraftPlace.org: <http://www.craftplace.org>

Under 'Craft Project Finder' and then 'Fashion Art' in the drop down menu there are plenty of easy patterns and refashioning ideas, for example a plaid bikini, glammed-up sneakers, and a t-shirt halter top. Many of the projects are also accompanied by PDF instructions and patterns.

MissMalaprop.com: <http://www.missmalaprop.com/>

A website dedicated to independent designers and businesses. There are lots of general craft and DIY ideas, as well as some refashioning ideas like sweater arm warmers, headbands and other hair accessories.

Mullen, W. (2006) *Sew U: The Built by Wendy guide to making your own wardrobe*. Boston: Bullfinch Press.

Nicolay, M. (2006). *Generation T: 108 ways to transform a t-shirt*. New York: Workman.

Rannels, M. (2006). *Sew subversive: Down and dirty DIY for the fabulous fashionista*. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press.

Sistahs of Harlem. (2006). *T-Shirt Makeovers: 20 Transformations for Fabulous Fashions*. New York: Glitteratti.

Threadbanger: <http://www.threadbanger.com/>

"Threadbanger is a network for people who love to DIY, recreate, refashion and craft. Forget about corporate stores, we're here to help you create and find your own style! From our episodes, forum and blog to our newsletter and contests, there is something for everyone. Our goal is to bring together people who can share their ideas, tips and advice with others and help make the world more fashionable – Threadbanger style!" (Threadbanger, n.d.).

Wardrobe Refashion: <http://www.nikkishell.typepad.com/wardroberefashion/>

An interesting and helpful forum where people who are participating in the Wardrobe Refashion pledge share ideas and show results. The Wardrobe Refashion pledge is to not buy manufactured clothing for 2, 4, 6 months, or life, and instead revamp preloved items.