

Buttons, Pins, and Patches

Kim Johnson

Customizing belongings such as clothing, backpacks, purses, wallets, and jewellery can be an exciting way for teens to express themselves creatively. It is also a good way to personalize items that might be commonplace within peer groups. A plain backpack is transformed into a backpack with style. This helps teens get in touch with creative impulses in a way that encourages expression and individuality.

Similarly, using commonplace items to create entirely new items or works of art is also a great way to stimulate and express creative impulses. Simple craft projects that involve teens bringing in their own items in order to either modify them or create entirely new items from them can make wonderful library craft programs.

Button modification, pin making, and patch making are all examples of this trend in personalization and modification.

Buttons

Buttons, historically, were discovered in 2000 B.C. (Davis, 2006, p. 13). They have always been used practically to fasten clothes

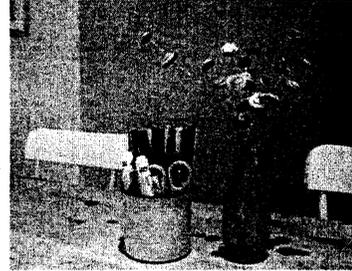
together. However, around the nineteenth century, buttons “became part of the style,” and there were “beautifully made buttons for dresses and jackets” (Epstein & Safro, 1991, p. 14). Not surprisingly, this is around the same time that the rich and fashionable started collecting buttons (Epstein & Safro, 1991, p. 14). Buttons were often expensive items, “chosen with as much care as would be taken over a piece of jewellery” (Meredith, 2000, p. 8). Button collecting and accessorizing speaks to the available beauty and detail of these objects.

There are some great and easy craft projects using buttons. The wonderful thing about running a button-related project in the library is that the teens can bring in their buttons. They can range from fancy buttons or buttons of sentimental value to spare buttons that everyone has sitting in drawers or in boxes. It is fun to see all the different buttons, and it can save the library in supply costs. Button projects involve taking existing, often plain, everyday items and modifying them into something entirely new, like making button earrings, bracelets, or bags. Most button projects are very cost effective.

TIP: Start collecting buttons well before the project date. Ask staff and patrons for spare buttons. It is nice to have extra buttons to offer teens who forget to bring their own, or who do not have any to bring in.

Project: Button Bouquet

This is a cute, easy, and quick button project. It would be nice for a large group of teens because it would not require very much supervision, as it is fairly self-explanatory. These bouquets make nice presents or decorative items.



You will need:

- Buttons (20-40 each)
- Pliers
- Mid-weight florist wire in 30cm+ lengths
- Small glasses or vases

Instructions:

1. Thread the first button onto the wire, twist wire back through a second hole in the button
2. Thread another button on and twist the wire underneath so that they stay in place
3. Add more groupings of buttons and twist underneath each
4. Place 'stems' in a vase and arrange

TIP: Incorporate buttons into other crafting projects to enhance them.



For example, tree ornaments:
<http://www.christmascrafts.com/ornaments/christmas-tree/felt-christmas-tree-ornament.htm>

Adapted from:

<http://kiddley.com/2006/05/31/a-button-bouquet/>

Pins

Pins are so much fun! Who doesn't love pins?

What's more fun than pins?

Making pins!

Pin making (also known as button making) can be a super fun library craft. The pins can be detailed and difficult or they can be simple and whimsical. For teens especially this is an excellent form of self-expression because they can literally express themselves and their opinions on the pins. Pin making will likely attract teens that might not attend other crafty programs.

The downfall of pin making is getting a hold of the button-maker machine itself. A good machine will run you between \$200-300, which can be a substantial initial investment. And then the library will need to purchase the buttons (about \$50 for 500). It might be a

good idea to rent or borrow a button-maker for a few projects and see how successful it is with the teens. Then decide from there if it is a worthwhile investment. It might also be good to let the teens sign themselves up for self-directed button-making projects (if they have something they want to promote). They may have to provide their own buttons, though, if it is a large project.

Here are the top reasons that teens will attend pin-making programs:

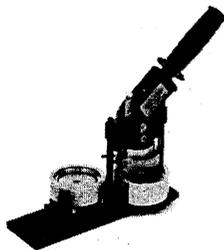
- It is an easy way to personalize something
- Pins can be used to express teens' awareness of, interest in, and opinions about political and social issues
- Pins can be used to promote budding businesses, bands, theatre groups, dance groups, etc.
- Personalized pins make lovely present

Watertown Public Library bought a button maker and advertises to teens: "Make your own buttons! We just bought a button machine so that you can design your own buttons. Bring your ideas to the library on Thursday, November 13 at 4 pm and you can create your own wearable art." (<http://watertownlibraryteens.blogspot.com/2008/11/craft-buttons.html>)

Project: Pin Making (or Button Making)

Materials:

- Button maker
- Button shell
- Button pin-back
- Button mylar
- Paper or fabric for design



TIP: There are plastic snap-in buttons available. These will run you about \$100 for 100 pins.

After you have collected all the materials, the process is fairly straightforward: have the teens design something onto their paper or the fabric, and then make it into a pin with the button maker. The teens will probably want to design something on the computer, so it would be good to have some computers available. It might be a good idea to have the librarian in charge of the button maker, so that the teens can work on their buttons and then come up to transform the design into a button.

Patches

Similar to pin making, patch making is a great way to get teens that may not otherwise be considered “crafty” into the library for some crafting. Patches are neat items that modify, accessorize, or repair existing clothes. Teens can bring in and personalize their own clothing.



Project: Iron-on Patches

Materials:

- Iron-on patch fabric
- Clothes, optional (the teens can bring in clothes that they want to patch up, or they can take the patches home and save them for later)
- Acrylic paint
- Puffy paint (optional, for edges of patch)
- Paint brushes
- Stencils (optional)
- Pens
- Scissors
- Iron
- Ironing board

Instructions:

Like pin making, patch making is fairly straightforward. Gather the teens; give them some fabric, paints, and brushes. Get them to design and paint their patches. Then they will cut them out. Once they are finished and after the paint has dried, have them bring their designs up to the librarian so that he/she can iron it on to the clothing or personal item.

Adapted from

http://www.diynetwork.com/diy/ca_crafts_projects/article/0,2041,DIY_13721_2273358,00.html

Web Resources:

Button Blog: <http://buttonmakers.blogspot.com/>

Button Crafts: <http://barbarah.wordpress.com/2007/01/09/more-button-crafts/>

Button Mad: <http://www.buttonmad.com/Site/Uses/Crafting.htm>

Martha Stewart – buttons:

http://www.marthastewart.com/article/button-crafts?autonomy_kw=buttons&rsc=header_2

Button Supplies: <http://www.buttonbiz.com/>

References:

Davis, S. (2006). *Beautiful button jewelry*. New York: Sterling.

Meredith, A. & Meredith, G. (2000). *Buttons: A selection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century enamels*. Princes Risborough: Shire.

Epstein, D. & Safro, M. (1991). *Buttons*. New York : H.N. Abrams. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books?id=HllQAAAAMAAJ>.