

Things from Future Libraries

An imaginative & interactive futures thinking experience.

Developed by the Special Projects Library Action Team at the Idaho Commission for Libraries, with support from the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

Inspired by and adapted from the Futures Bazaar Toolkit, created by the Situation Lab & BBC



SITUATION LAB





OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Don't Miss!



50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are **\$1** each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10:45 a.m. on Friday, May 8th.**



PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Choptank Ballroom



KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 11:00 p.m.
Windjammer



Step 0

Welcome

Step 0: Welcome



Today's Agenda

Welcome & Introductions

Introduction to Future Thinking

Decision Matrix Activity

Warm Up

Gather

Ideate & Create

BREAK (15 minute)

Prep for the Archive

Show & Tell

Wrap Up



What to expect from today?

- While playing a game, teams will consider different future scenarios and pick **one**.
- Teams will collaborate to **imagine** and **create** objects from a library in their chosen future using **future fodder** and craft supplies.
- Objects will represent a program, service, and borrowable item in a library, but all of them will need a **description** for the archive.
- One member of each team will **share** their objects with the room.



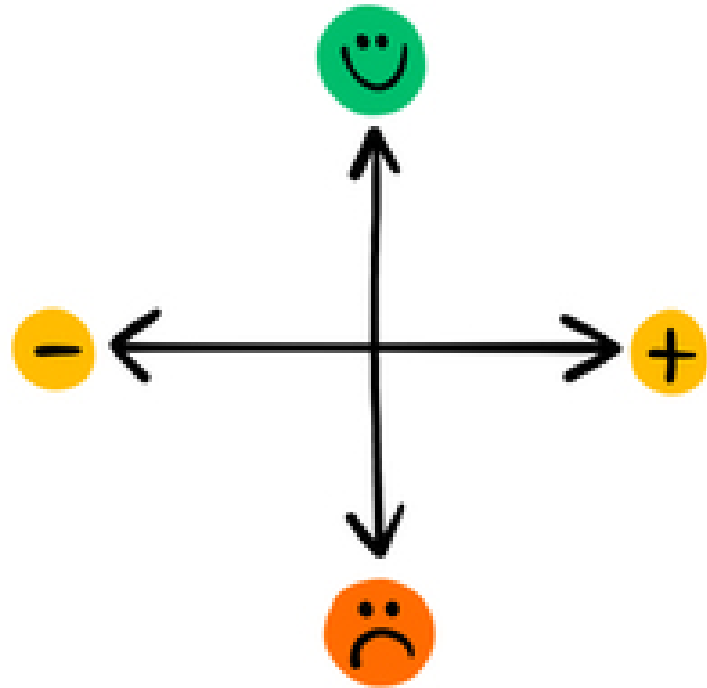


Why are we doing this?

It's not just for kids – **play** is a powerful tool for learning and helps us stretch and strengthen our future thinking muscles. This is *serious* play!



Step 0: Welcome

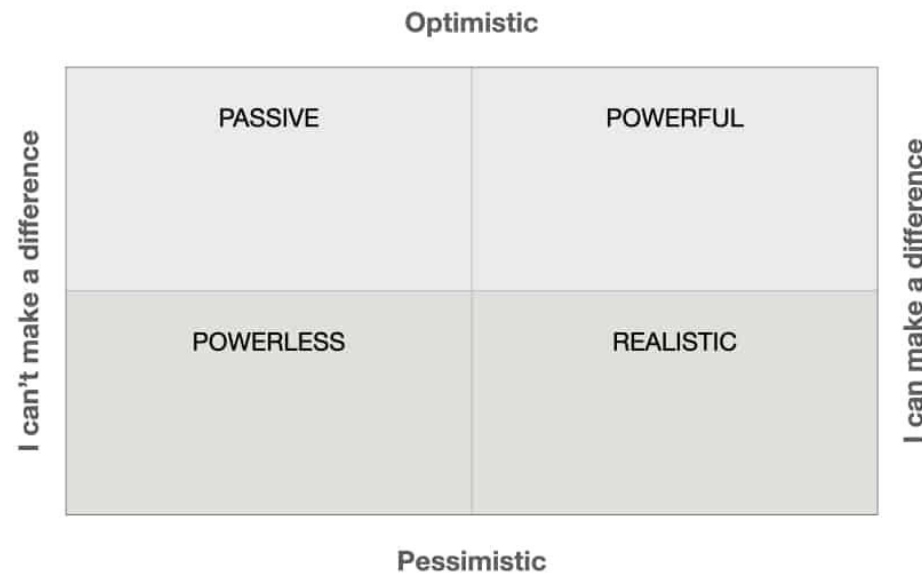


Step 0: Welcome



The Polak Game

Where do you stand regarding the future?



LIBERATIONIST

<https://jfsdigital.org/articles-and-essays/2017-2/the-polak-game-or-where-do-you-stand/>



A brief introduction to futures thinking

The future has yet to be written – which means YOU can influence it!

Step 0: Welcome



Future thinking is a structured way to speculate what MIGHT happen, so that you can plan for those possible events in the future.

It's not about predicting "THE Future." It's about imagining possible futures and thinking through how to respond to them.

Future thinking can help you make decisions now to pull yourself or your organization to the future that you want to see.



Consider a flashlight

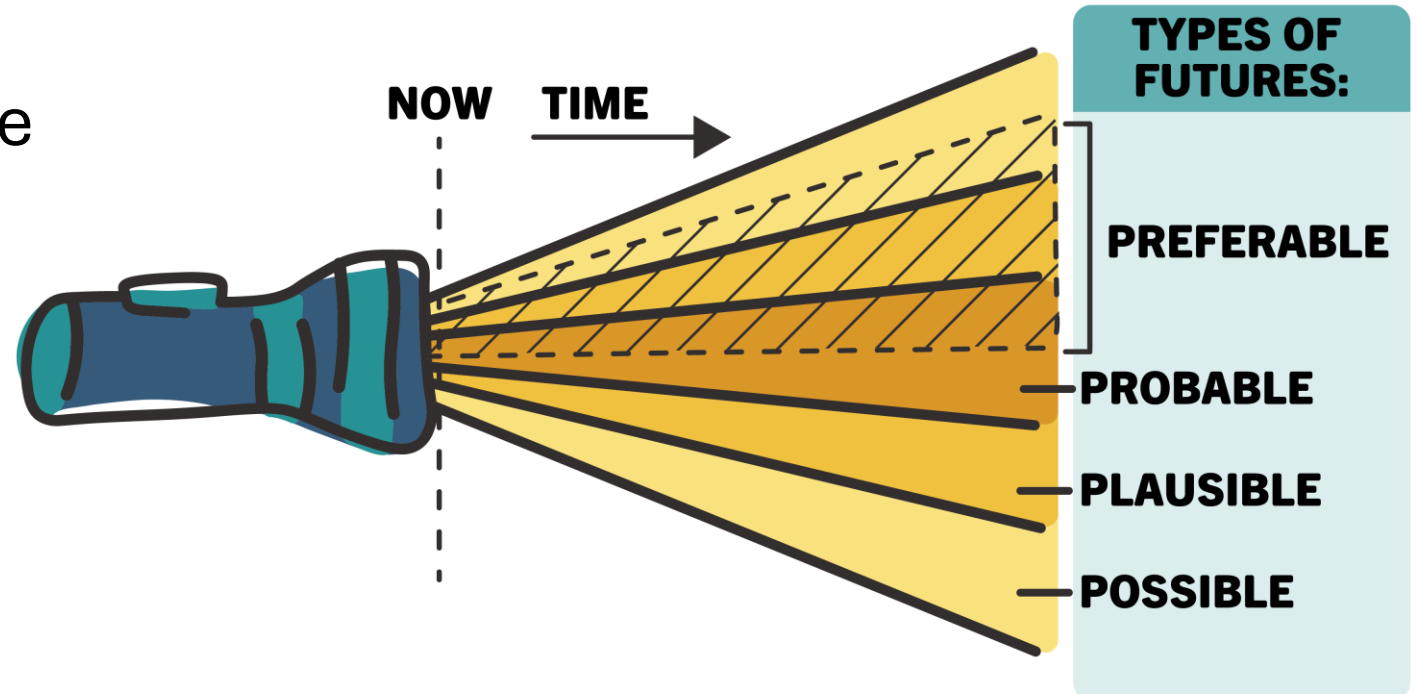
- If you shine a flashlight into a dark room, it helps you to see some of what's ahead.
- The brighter and wider the beam of light, the more we see and the safer we feel.
- If we see something scary ahead, we can prepare for it.
- There are limits - the beam of light can only reach so far.






Cone of plausibility

- There are multiple alternate future possibilities:
 - Probable
 - Projected
 - Plausible
 - Possible
 - Preposterous
 - Preferable





**Jane
McGonigal**
Imaginable

How to see the future
coming and feel ready
for anything—even
things that seem
impossible
today

Author of the
New York Times
Bestseller *Reality
Is Broken*



Imagine...





PREDICTING THE PAST

Think about a choice that you made, or an action that you took, and ask yourself:

- **“What if I had done something else?”**
- **“How might my day have gone differently?”**
- **“How might my entire LIFE have gone differently?”**
- **“What would I be doing today instead?”**



Why is this important?

The present moment was NOT inevitable, it was shaped through the choices we made.

If the present moment is not inevitable, the future is not inevitable either.

We can shape the future through the choices that we make right now.

The X - Y - Z Method

X is something you love to do

Y is a person you care about

Z is a favorite far-away place

Imagine doing X with Y in Z

REMEMBERING THE FUTURE

Every time you remember a future, you rate it as more likely to happen

Picturing something vividly in your imagination creates something similar to a memory in your mind

If it's easy to imagine, it must be possible, because impossible things are hard to imagine.



Why is this important?

It strengthens your ability to believe that things that have not yet happened *can* happen in the future

The more ways you can imagine how the future could be different from the things you've already experienced, the better you'll be at envisioning change when you need it most.





Why think strategically about the future?

According to the Institute for the Future, thinking strategically about the future helps build seven key strengths:

- Creativity
- Foresight
- Mental flexibility
- Empathy
- Practical skepticism
- Strategy
- Hope



Scenarios

- Creating future scenarios with a group can give a common framework for planning
- Scenarios give you a way to test new ideas, initiatives
- Thinking through scenarios can prepare you to deal with the uncertainties that the future brings



Pause for Reflection

Cone of Plausibility

- How does this tool help you understand there are various futures?

Futures Thinking Skills

- What is something you now know but didn't when you walked in?

Polak Exercise

- How do you think your view of the future impacts how you plan for it?

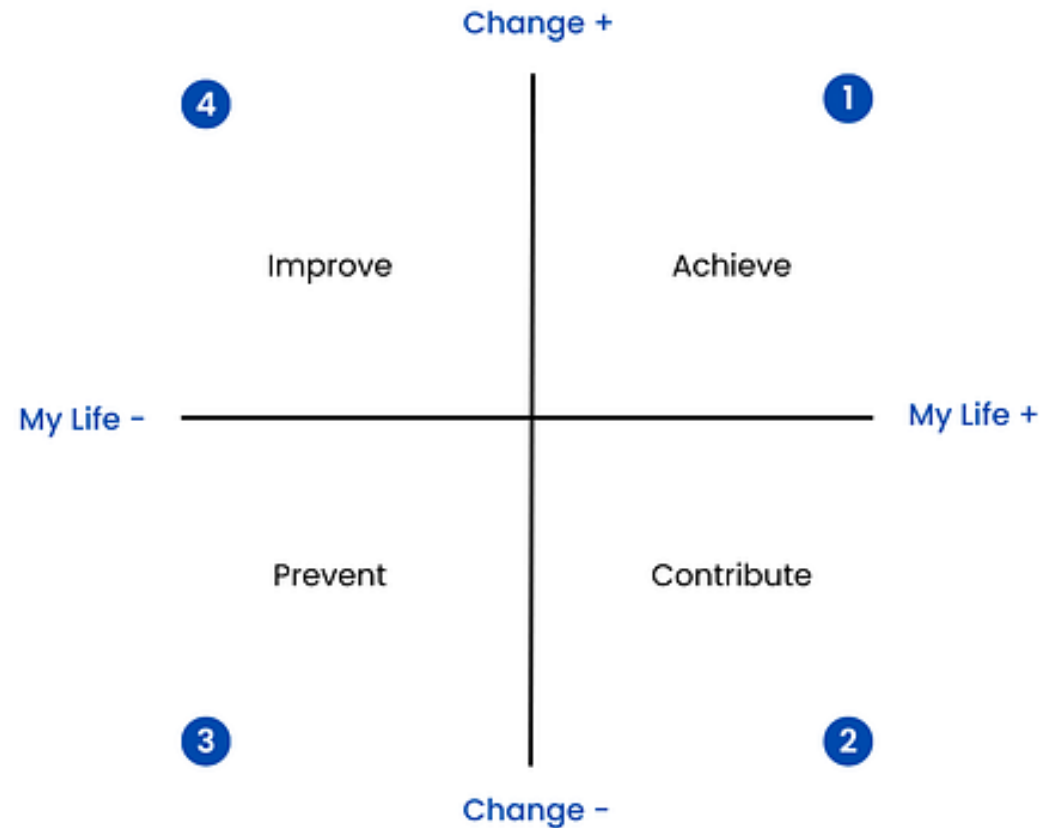
What is a benefit of being aware of these concepts?



Step 1

Warm Up

Step 1: Warm Up





Decision Matrix Activity

- X axis: Libraries Thrive/Libraries Struggle
- Generate Responses for each of the quadrants
- Y axis: 3 Different Topic Areas
 - AI: The use of AI increases/The use of AI decreases or normalizes.
 - Political Landscape: The overall political climate is hostile to libraries, versus the political climate being supportive of libraries.
 - Environment: Climate change causes increased societal disruption/Climate change stabilizes or eases



BREAK

Step 1: Warm Up



Let's practice
imagining things from
future libraries!

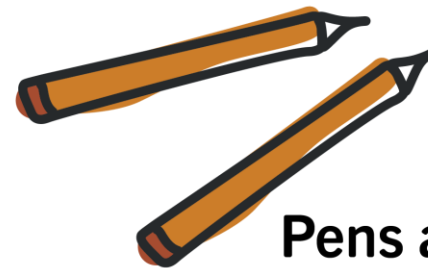
As a team, you will be co-creating different futures based on your choices in the next 10 minutes.

You'll need:

Prompt Sheet



Warm Up Sheet



Pens and Pencils

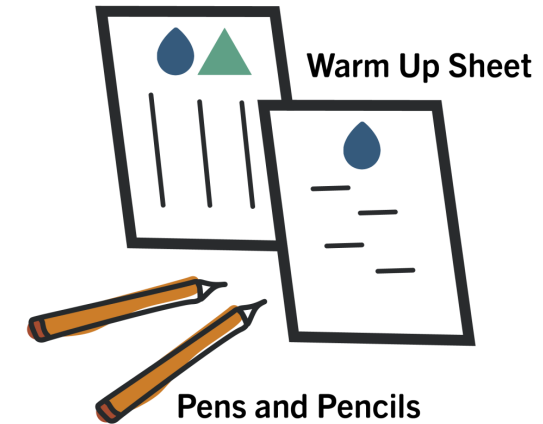
Step 1: Warm Up



You have **10 minutes...**

- Select a **theme** from the theme bucket
- **Select a Future** from the future bucket
- Choose a **mood** from the mood bucket
- *Decide if your thing is a **program, service, or borrowable item***
- Record the selections on your **Warm Up Sheet**
- Create a **description** and/or **sketch** – try to be as specific as possible!
- **Discuss** your various things in your team.
- **Share** out to the rest of the group.

Prompt Sheet





Step 2

Gather

Step 2: Gather



Choose one of the futures you created or decide on another one

You are going to work to create 3 items for your future library – a borrowable item, a program and a service.

You'll need:



Step 2: Gather



You have **5 minutes**...

- One at a time, a person from each team will select an item from the pile of **future fodder** and bring it back to your table.
- These objects will be used to build **prototypes** of the **things from future libraries** you co-created in the previous step.
- Which objects make you think of the future you selected?
- Please move **quickly** yet **safely**.





Step 3

Ideate & Create

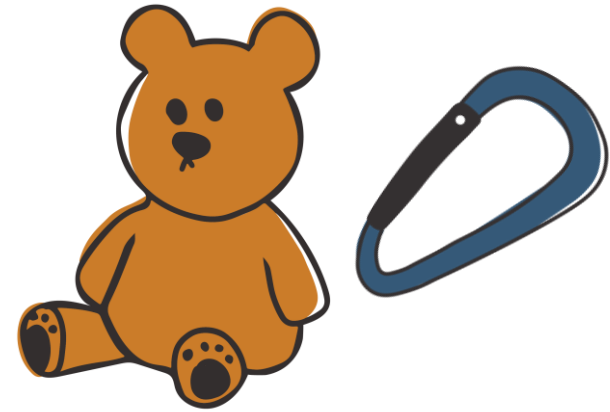
Step 3: Ideate & Create



Let's start **building**
these things from
future libraries!

Now it is time for teams to
build prototypes of the things
they imagined together.

You'll need:



Step 3: Ideate & Create



You have **60 minutes**...

- Each team will **construct** three **things** from their **future library** – a **program**, a **service** and a **borrowable item**.

Questions to consider:

- How can the items & materials available to us be **reimagined** and **remade** as a unique thing from our future library?
- How will **library staff** in our future interact with this thing?
- How will **library patrons** in our future engage with this thing?
- What **need in the community** does this thing meet? Why?





Step 4

Prep for Archive

Step 4: Prep for Archive



Now we will **describe** these future things for the **archive/catalog!**

Help us create an archive of objects from future libraries by documenting what you made today.

You'll need:

Archive Sheet



Pens and Pencils

Step 4: Prep for Archive



You have **10 minutes...**

- Complete one **Archive Sheet** for each thing.
- Take a **photo** of each thing and your team.
- Decide on a team **name**.
- Get ready to **share** about what you created with the larger group.

Archive Sheet



Pens and Pencils





Step 5

Show & Tell

Step 5: Show & Tell



Let's learn about these amazing objects from the future you created!

Teams will share out to the larger group a quick summary of their future library and the objects they made.



Step 5: Show & Tell



Each team will:

- Quickly **share** the characteristics of the unique future they've imagined.
- **Explain, demonstrate, and describe** the objects they prototyped from a library in their future.

Questions to consider:

- How will **library staff** or **patrons** interact with the object?
- What **need** in the community does this object meet?





Step 6

Wrap Up

Step 6: Wrap Up



We're almost done!
Let's **tidy up** our
spaces and **reflect** on
what we've learned.

After going through this
experience, what are your
thoughts about the future?



Step 6: Wrap Up



Pause for Reflection:

- What did you like about this experience?
- What new insight about libraries do you have after this experience?
- What is one aspect of, or idea inspired by a future object you saw today that you could see becoming a reality?
- Think about a program, an item, or a service that exists in libraries now that didn't exist 30 years ago. What's changed?

Ah-has:

- No matter what happens, libraries will be adapting and changing to support the needs of their communities. This gives us a lot of hope!

Thank you!

Contact the creators of this toolkit at:

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To learn more about SPLAT's work with Futures Thinking, visit
<https://libraries.idaho.gov/SPLAT>

To learn more about the resource this event is adapted from, visit
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/gel/features/futures-bazaar-toolkit>



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**Please take a moment to
complete the program survey.**



SCAN ME!