



Stanford eCorner

The Future of the Maker Movement

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Brit Morin, founder and CEO of Brit + Co, talks about emerging trends in the maker movement, fueled by crowdfunding and advances in do-it-yourself technology. She says that also means society is just a few years away from having to redefine copyright law for an age when consumers will be able to download designs and create products at home that were originally conceived by others.



Transcript

The Maker Movement though is what's more exciting to me, and this is something that will continue and to get bigger and bigger every year, like you saw on that Google search graph. It's about everything from the analog world of making and creativity, traditional arts like letterpress, which are coming back, but also all the benefits that technology is bringing to how we're making and creating. We're able to open source our designs so that others can freely download them and access them. There are online learning platforms not just from Brit + Co, but from others, as well, where people are able to get educated if they don't live near a college, or university, or any type of workshop that offers classes. 3D rendering is so cool right now. This is a new startup called that launched. You can literally take a picture of any room in your house, and they'll 3D render it and show you what real furniture looks like in that room. They're importing products from West Elm and Crate & Barrel, and letting you swap things in and out. So from an interior designer's perspective, this is a new way to think about creativity. Smart devices, of course, and machines that are helping us learn things faster.

This is a favorite example of mine. It's called the gTar. It's an iPhone connected guitar. It literally shows you the cords from an app on your phone that you should be playing, so it teaches you how to play the guitar just from looking at your phone. Crowd funding, of course, is what's enabling all of these small entrepreneurs and startups to actually get started. We've seen some amazing new products launched because of Kickstarter and Indiegogo. There's only more of that to come. 3D printers, which has not yet gone mainstream, for sure. They're still very expensive. Quality isn't there yet, but they are getting way better.

People are using them to create human tissue and bone, to create all kinds of food. I'm an adviser for a company that's actually using 3D printers to create real clothing and textiles through a process called electronic spinning. And in the future, imagine going into your closet, downloading a blouse design from J.Crew, pressing print, and having it export for you in a glass machine. This is a real future that's literally years in front of us. So what does this mean? This is all just a few years out. We're in this moment before when inkjet printers were only able to be found at Kinkos, and we're in that moment with 3D printers right now in a lot of the Maker Movement. But soon we're all going to have access to these devices. They're going to be just a couple hundred bucks. We're going to have them on our desktops, in our kitchens. They're going to be the way that we produce and manufacture on our own.

And so what implications could that have? It's something I'm thinking a lot about. Maker spaces right now are the FedEx and Kinkos of the world. It's where people are going to use these machines and devices. I think these will continue to be popular for the next two years until we see those price points fall. The cost of prototyping, because of these maker spaces, has gone down significantly. You used to have to prototype things in China for tens of thousands of dollars. This is the DODOcase. It's an iPad case. You guys might have seen it before. Literally, it was made in just a couple weeks for about \$1,000.

Apple saw it, decided to pick it up in their online store. It sold \$1 million of product within its first month, so all for just \$1,000 and a guy who was tinkering with a laser cutter. I'm really excited about customization. Think about the idea that if we have this long tail manufacturing, you're able to make stuff on your own. You can add your name to things. You can add colors that you like. You can scan your body and make things perfectly fit you the way you want it to. Customization is going to be a really big option for us in the future. But it does open up to copyright issues. Think of this a lot like the music industry.

If we're all able to download an open sourced file, what does that mean? Does the designer who made the JCrew blouse get credit when you download it? Does he get paid? Can I legally send that file to someone else? It's going to get really interesting with the way that digital files are transferred for product designs. The whole nation, like I mentioned, the White House is behind this, is incredibly excited about STEAM, Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. And I say STEAM because art is included in that, and the White House are starting to use that term, as well. But we're seeing kids, especially those in their early preteen years really embrace this. I mentor a group of 12-year-olds who actually know more about CAD design than me. And it freaks me out, and they also speak Mandarin. So the future generations are definitely in this. But of course, it all comes back to play. Regardless of how this affects our economy, our different industries, I hope that people will also just take time to participate in creativity in their daily life. One exciting note to end on is that with all of these changes with the Maker Movement, people are predicting that the self manufacturing in homes could equate to a \$55 billion industry by the year 2020.

That's just five years away. This is on top of the arts and crafts industry that already exists. So this industry is only getting bigger. It's getting bigger very quickly, so pay attention.