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Collab: gadgITERATION
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My Maker Faire Experience

I first heard of Maker Faire last year via the MFADT listserv. I didn't get a chance to go, but from what I heard, it seemed like a fun fair where people were able to display their projects. This year was my first time in attendance and I am glad I went.

Upon arrival I was a bit surprised because the fair was a lot larger than I expected. There was a lot going on and there was something for people of all ages. I was able to get a quick look at some of the other tables to get a sense of what else was being offered. The innovation was incredible. It was like getting a glimpse into what the future may hold, like getting an exclusive sneak peak. What I was most surprised and impressed by was the amount of children there were. I was happy to see all the projects set up for kids to play and learn about technology.

What I found I was most impressed by were those projects that still had that raw look and feel to them. The ones where it seemed like children were able to play or build something from scratch. The gadgITERATION table was perfect for that. The projects didn't seem too overwhelming or unattainable for the kids and they were intrigued to learn more. Some wanted to play, some wanted to learn, and some wanted to build. The gadgITERATION table was perfect for all three of those. Parents were not excluded from the experience, as it was also complex enough to keep their interest but simple enough that they could help explain it to their kids.

I think this approachability is something that should be reflected in our site design. Something that is simple and easy to digest, but still complex enough that it feels there is substance to it.

One thing I did not like was how difficult the actual fair was to navigate. There was a lot going on, but there did not seem to be any clear way of finding exactly what you were looking for. It took me quite some time to find our table, and the only reason I found it when I did was because I ran into a fellow D+T student. With our website, information or activities should not be difficult to find. Everything should be intuitive and easy to navigate. There should be a flow to how things are structured so that users aren't left lost and confused, then end up leaving the site.

The Maker Faire was a nice introduction into the maker community on a large scale for me. I didn't get a chance to look through the fair's entire offering, but I felt I got a good sense of the culture. I see the importance and value of a program like gadgITERATION and see its growth potential. I am glad I was able to attend.