The Saint Paul Public Library and the Science Museum of Minnesota are partnering to bring teens and technology together. The two organizations are training a group of teens, called the Teen Tech Crew, to introduce other teens to new technologies. The Teen Tech Crew hosts weekly workshops for teens at three libraries June 20 - August 24. Area teens are welcome to attend just one or all of the Teen Tech Crew workshops, called CREATECH Labs. The workshops occur at three different libraries and address different topics each week. Topics have included video game creation, long exposure photography, and animation.

CREATECH Labs embrace the idea of HOMAGO (Hanging Out, Messing Around, Geeking Out). HOMAGO is a new concept in teen education that was developed by cultural anthropologist Mizuko Ito. It acknowledges the importance of giving teens time and space to learn. It's okay to just hang out in the room, building social ties and passively absorbing the lesson of the day. Interested teens can mess around with the activity. They may not produce very much, but they've gained a comfort level with a new technology that will serve them in the future. A select few will geek out and dive into the activity, building a full-fledged skill. The important thing is that each level of involvement is valid. Just as attending storytime helps toddlers become good readers later in life, attending technology workshops prepares youth to live in a world where comfort with technology will be essential in school and at work.

“We are rethinking what educational spaces for teens look and feel like,” said Marika Staloch, Saint Paul Public Library’s Teen Technology Project Manager. “Research suggests that informal, casual learning is incredibly important for this age group.”

The Teen Tech Crew leads these valuable workshops. While this group of teens helps other teens develop valuable skills, they are also developing valuable skills themselves, learning about the technologies they are teaching and learning to become teachers and leaders. Members of this crew, along with mentors from the Science Museum, are attending and presenting at a national conference on Scratch computer programming at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts July 25-28. Scratch is a programming language designed to introduce youth to the creative and rational thought processes necessary for computer programming.

“The Scratch conference is an interesting mix of youth and adults, all learning from each other,” said Keith Braafladt, the Science Museum’s Learning Technologies Center Director. “Teens have a lot to teach adults, as well as other teens. We’re here to help facilitate this process.”

Any interested teen is welcome to attend the Teen Tech Crew’s CREATECH Labs from June

20-August 24. The schedule is below. (CREATECH Labs will continue in the fall, but the schedule has not yet been set.)

Wednesdays, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Rice Street Library
1011 Rice St.
Saint Paul, MN 55117
651-558-2223

Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Arlington Hills Library
1105 Greenbrier St.
Saint Paul, MN 55106
651-793-3930

Fridays, 2:00-4:00 pm
Rondo Library
461 N Dale St.
Saint Paul, MN 55103
651-266-7400

Please visit www.sppl.org/teens/createch for more information.