

Portland Public Library
Portland Public Library Digital Commons

Makers@PPL: Stories in the Making audio
interviews

Portland Public Library History

4-25-2015

Interview with Samantha Cote

Samantha Cote

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.portlandlibrary.com/pplhistory_makers_audio_interviews

Recommended Citation

Catherine Fisher, "Interview with Samantha Cote" (2015). *Makers@PPL: Stories in the Making audio interviews*. 5.
http://digitalcommons.portlandlibrary.com/pplhistory_makers_audio_interviews/5

This Sound is brought to you for free and open access by the Portland Public Library History at Portland Public Library Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Makers@PPL: Stories in the Making audio interviews by an authorized administrator of Portland Public Library Digital Commons. For more information, please contact campbell@portland.lib.me.us.

Interviewer: Catherine Fisher
Interviewee: Samantha Cote
Makers@PPL, Portland, Maine
4.25.2015

CF: Here we are at Makers@PPL at the Portland Public Library on the 25th of April, year 2015. This is Catherine Fisher and I'm here with Samantha Cote. She is going to describe to us a very special thing that she likes to do.

SC: Hi everyone. I have what's called a makey-makey. It looks like a computer—a little hard drive—and it has a USB connector and you attach it to your computer and then it controls different keys on the keyboard via alligator clips. The keys it controls are the arrow keys, the space bar and the return button. It can also cover asdfg on the back side if you're playing a more complex game and basically what it is it's an electrical circuit and anything that conducts electricity can be used to control the keyboard. For example, the Internet Archive released a lot of games, like Mrs Pacman, and so you can create an old-fashioned Super Nintendo keyboard out of Play Dough, attach the alligator clips to it and then move Mrs Pacman around that way. Another fun thing I found that kids like—there's a program called Scratch put out by MIT where you can create games yourself. People have already created things like keyboards or drum sets and if you've got one person holding the grounding and the other people holding the alligator clips, you can make a drum set by high-fiving your friends.

CF: You're using your own body, then, to conduct the electricity, the current?

SC: Yes. We did a Totally Tech! technology fair for kids up in Waterville a few months ago and that was my booth and the kids were there. Mrs Pacman wasn't even that popular. We had that, but kids were way more excited about the keyboard and the drum set. I kinda wish I could see the other stuff there because we had an Arduino and a 3-D printer like some of the booths here, but I was too busy being there with the kids. And I think they could have come up with more stuff if I had let them loose. We had two laptops there with Scratch [programming software] and a couple of kids did create their own games while they were there and then let the other kids play with it, so that was fun.

CF: So it's fun for you to inspire the kids to make?

SC: Yeah, it's not something that comes naturally to me. I would never call myself a crafty person. My mother sews. I've got family members that do all kinds of things, but Scratch is a program that you can code with blocks, so rather than html or those kinds of languages, you can just move a block that says, "make this object move" and then you can attach and

say right or left or 180 degrees and then the computer fills in the rest for you. It's easier for kids and it's easier for me.

CF: Do you find that kids pick this stuff up more easily than adults?

SC: Yeah, they do. For example, maybe she'll talk to you later, but my friend Chris who's at the locker booth—she gave one of her little robots to the teens yesterday and said, what would you like to do with it? And they figured out how to program it to be a hot potato. So after a certain amount of time, randomly selected, it would beep and whoever that person was, they had the hot potato.

CF: They did that, with your guidance?

SC: Well, with Chris's, yeah. The other thing I'd like to do that I haven't quite figured out yet with my makey-makey is I've seen videos of people turning it into the game Dance Dance Revolution, but they've got little tubs of water instead, so I think it's attached to aluminum foil that goes into the water but I'm not sure where, what, how to get it up on my computer. That's what I have to work on for Dance Dance Revolution.

CF: So these kinds of tools are given to you—it doesn't seem like there's a lot of limit, right? It's up to you to make it what it will be.

SC: Right, I came up with the keyboard and the Mrs Pacman because I had seen those. But the kids—they can come up with so many more uses for it than I can.

CF: Good to be around them. That's so great. I really appreciate you sharing that.

SC: No problem.