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## 3D printing at a CAP site near you

The Nova Scotia Community Access program, in partnership with Pictou-Antigonish Regional Libraries, is rolling out the latest in 3 dimensional printing technologies in River John, Antigonish, and New Glasgow.

Called Makerspaces, each CAP site/library will have a dedicated Makerbot Replicator 2 printer available to print 3 dimensional models that have been either downloaded from the Internet or created using free software such as Google Sketchup. Explains NSCAP Chair Eric Stackhouse “Our plan is to have sixteen printers publically available in communities across Nova Scotia, we don’t know of any other jurisdiction the size of Nova Scotia that has done this. These three are just the beginning; more will follow in May.” The 3D printing technology is part of the new NSCAP mandate to introduce new technologies, encourage everyone to think how they can use technology to be more productive, engage youth in science, and generally to develop a learning community through cooperation and sharing of new skills.

3D printing, or distributed manufacturing, is a new technology that has the potential to change the way items are made and distributed. A 3 dimensional model or idea can be made into a physical object on site. It is being used by all sectors and by large and small businesses wishing to develop prototypes. But it is also being used by those with creative minds. 3D printers have a wide range of price and capability; the Replicator 2 is designed for those getting started with this technology. The objects are printed in PLA, a strong natural substance made from plants.

“As we are on the leading edge, it will take us a while to develop the best way to have the public access this.” says Stackhouse. “But if you bring in your 3D idea on a USB flash drive we can help you print it.”

Funding for this initiative is a combination of community funds and funding provided by the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. NSCAP has partnered with Dalhousie University Libraries in this initiative.

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