Annual Report
FY20-21
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The past two years have presented significant challenges to our community and our young learners. Thinkery’s mission of creating innovative learning experiences to equip and inspire the next generation of creative problem solvers has never been more important as we adapt to help children thrive in this dynamically changing world. The magic of Thinkery and the experiences we create spark our children’s natural curiosity and creativity igniting a love of learning in their crucial early learning years. We do this through our play-based museum experiences, our inquiry rich STEAM educational programs and, most recently, in our research based Little Thinkers Preschool.

What’s heartbreaking though is that not all children have these opportunities. The socio-economic divide in Austin is only growing and can be seen in the stark reality that only 36% of children from low-income families are kindergarten ready. And the research shows that when children start behind, the likelihood they will catch up and thrive is alarmingly low. What’s heartbreaking though is that not all children have these opportunities. The socio-economic divide in Austin is only growing and can be seen in the stark reality that only 36% of children from low-income families are kindergarten ready. And the research shows that when children start behind, the likelihood they will catch up and thrive is alarmingly low.

We have a moral imperative as a community to provide equitable opportunity for those who have been underserved and underrepresented. Thinkery’s strategic vision to be a trusted community hub, inspiring lifelong learning for ALL children through hands-on, play-based STEAM educational experiences is focused on this. We need your support to expand access to Thinkery experiences to those in our community who need them the most.

On behalf of Thinkery and every child that has an ah-ha moment of discovery through our learning experiences, thank you!
Greetings Thinkery Community!

I have the great pleasure of serving as Thinkery’s Board President this year and as a member of the board for 4 years. In this time, I have gotten to witness firsthand the awesome impact Thinkery is making in our community. Play-based learning ensures curiosity lives beyond a moment; it is sparked for a lifetime. All children, regardless of means, deserve access to quality educational experiences, and I am proud of how Thinkery has made access and inclusion a strategic priority.

One of the practices we have on the Board is sharing our “Thinkery Why”. I’d like to share mine with you today. I was introduced to the Thinkery on the very last day of the 2nd Street location. I had as much fun as my then two-year-old! We learned, played and smiled together. My family and I often reflect on how our Thinkery moments brought us closer together as a unit. And therein lies the magic of this museum - it creates connections that continue beyond a visitor’s time at Meredith Learning Lab. Those moments remind us to be playful, ask questions, and work together to find answers.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for being an important part of Thinkery’s mission. You are AWESOME!

John Antonelli
Board President
FY20-21
Open Door

Thinkery’s Open Door Initiative works to eliminate barriers to the inspirational learning opportunities in the museum and Thinkery’s educational programs like Little Thinkers Preschool and camps. Rather than waiting for opportunity to knock, the Open Door Initiative gives children and families the chance to engage with STEAM education as soon—and as often—as they’re ready. We do this through:

• Free or discounted museum visits through Museums for All, a national program with which Thinkery is a proud participant
• Full and partial scholarships for Thinkery Camps, Little Thinkers Preschool, and other early learner programs
• Free weekly Community Night hours, which currently take place on Sundays, 3 – 5 pm
• Discounted Field Trip pricing for Title I schools
• Memberships for entire community organizations or individual families, at price points that work for their budgets

SUPPORT FOR OPEN DOOR COMES FROM

3M FOUNDATION, ANONYMOUS, ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN’S MUSEUMS, AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, BANK OF AMERICA, CAPITAL ONE, CHARLES SCHWAB, CITY OF AUSTIN, GOOGLE FIBER, HEB TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS, JUNIOR LEAGUE OF AUSTIN, KEYSTONE BANK, MINT BUILDERS LLC, NETSPEND, NEW YORK HALL OF SCIENCE, PINNERGY LTD., SILICON LABS, TEXAS CAPITAL BANK
Strengthening Inclusion and Access

We know the work to create a culture of belonging is continuous and deep. During the summer 2021, every staff member and the Board of Directors completed a comprehensive inter-cultural competency assessment to inform individual journeys to advance their understanding of what diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility mean to them and how it relates to their role at Thinkery. By following this effort with ongoing professional development, training and conversations, we are creating a space that supports what we aspire to be everyday: a cultural institution where everyone feels they belong.

Thinkery understands that its priority to create inspirational learning experiences for all children and expanding Thinkery with the community is driven by deep relationships with community-serving organizations. Our intentional approach to community relationships centers community listening and co-creating programming that leverages STEAM-based learning to serve their communities – our communities.
The C.R.E.A.T.E. (Collaboration to Realize Equity and Teach Engineering) program is designed to inspire and prepare a diverse pipeline of future engineers through afterschool education, youth development programming, and family engagement. C.R.E.A.T.E. supplies hands-on, interactive design experiences for underrepresented youth throughout Austin, and fosters interest in engineering and science for a whole new generation of young learners.

The program is a collaboration between Thinkery, NI, and Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area (BGCAA). Through hands-on and play-based activities, BGCAA youth will ask, research, imagine, plan, create, test and improve, becoming proficient in all the fundamentals of the Engineering Design Process. These small-group learning sessions later culminate with a dedicated Field Trip experience at Thinkery. We had a blast exploring with young learners from the Boys & Girls Club in 2021!

“*We are thrilled to collaborate with Thinkery and BGCAA on C.R.E.A.T.E. to inspire and prepare a diverse pipeline of future engineers. Impressed by the research-backed curriculum and hands on program experience this brings to Austin’s underrepresented youth, we are proud to be the initial funder of this impactful program. From the many smiles Niers saw on the kids’ first field trip to Thinkery, it was obvious how much fun learning can be.*”

*Katherine Prath, Director or Global Corporate Impact, NI*
Thinkery provides area educators tools to inspire future creators and technologists through professional development that builds skills to integrate STEAM concepts into their teaching. Thinkery’s professional development programs for early learners and K-5 educators address the need for high-quality educational experiences for underserved youth by increasing classroom educators’ capacity to deliver and support this curriculum. Using research-backed insights, educators gain the confidence and competency they need to provide STEAM-focused, hands-on content and activities, serving students for years to come.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Thinkery’s process and methodology is unique and nationally recognized. Our play-based, inquiry-rich approach is driven by STEAM-based concepts. Through partnerships with leaders in play-driven fields, like LEGO and community-based non-profit organizations like United Way’s Success by Six Coalition, school districts in Del Valle and Leander, and educators at Title 1 Schools, Thinkery’s experts work to build confidence in implementing STEAM concepts in the curriculum.

EDEXCHANGE
Each fall, Thinkery provides free hands-on professional development workshops to EdExchange participants, especially those working in Title I schools. In the spring, Thinkery spends six to eight weeks supporting this cohort with onsite, technology-based activities and lessons.

STEAM FOR EARLY LEARNERS:
Thinkery was honored to play a role in building equity through STEAM focused education, parenting and job skills development through a dual generation learning-practice collaboration serving families with young children. Working in partnership with Child Inc, SAFE Alliance, and Foundation Communities, Thinkery staff are co-creating learning spaces that inspire lifelong learning for the organizations’ clients and celebrating increased teaching confidence for the educators!

Support comes from:
THE GENEVIEVE AND WARD ORSINGER FOUNDATION,
TEXAS MUTUAL, POWELL FOUNDATION,
MILLIPORESIGMA, WEBBER FAMILY FOUNDATION
Thinkery celebrated its first graduating class of Pre-Kindergarteners in May 2021. Parents and caregivers gathered on the lawn to cheer on 13 little thinkers, draped in Thinkery red cap and gowns, ready to proceed full STEAM ahead to their bright future.

Recent headlines have shown the widespread negative impact the pandemic is having on students throughout Texas. This dramatically underscores the need to create a strong foundation for learning and discovery for children at an early age.

Our students learn and develop through thoughtful activities and gallery experiences that excite, engage, and encourage lifelong learning.

In August 2021, Little Thinkers Preschool expanded from two to four classrooms, doubling our capacity and our impact. Our preschool follows an emergent learners, lab school model and partners with UT Austin to infuse research-based best practices in Little Thinker’s Preschool curriculum.
Thinkery Camps provide a creative, safe and challenging environment for campers to learn and grow—and have a whole lot of fun while they’re doing it! Campers explore questions of “how” and “why” through immersive, interactive learning experiences designed to keep them moving, thinking and creating. Camps focus on STEAM, with a variety of playful mental, and physical challenges to activate campers’ creativity and natural curiosity.

Thinkery camps hit the road this year! In addition to offering 11 weeks of camps at The Meredith Learning Lab, Thinkery brought the camp experience to El Buen Samaritano for two weeks. Thinkery camp staff worked with El Buen staff to co-create STEAM-based educational experiences in a familiar environment for the community. We are grateful for the strong partnership with El Buen and for the great work they do every day.

Fun fact! When you become a member, you get early access to camp registration and so much. Visit thinkeryaustin.org to learn more.
Meredith Learning Lab Highlights

GALLERY UPDATES
After a pandemic hiatus, Spark Shop returned with exciting new maker activities that expand on important design-build concepts in creative and playful ways. Thinkery’s beloved Story Time program is back and better than ever with a deeper focus on activating learning using all the senses and more bilingual English/Spanish story times too!

BABY BLOOMERS
Thinkery prides itself on providing learning opportunities for children 0-11. Baby Bloomers is a program designed just for infants. On Saturday mornings, grownups and babies can join our talented early learner staff for activities that create connections to learning and curiosity through play.

NEW MUSEUM EXPERIENCE STAFFING STRUCTURE
Providing museum guests with a positive and playful experience is rewarding and challenging work. While these positions are largely entry, Thinkery recognizes the need to honor labor equitably. That’s why Thinkery began offering full-time, benefited work for our Museum Experience team (floor staff). Starting with five Museum Experience Leads, the program expanded to a total of nine this fiscal year. Alongside their part-time teammates, the Museum Experience team is a cross-functional team in museum operations and education, furthering the goal of the experience department to link those to facets together thereby creating a more integrated guest experience.
A Collaboration 15 Years in the Making

Children’s museums are the ideal nexus for partnerships designed to elevate childhood learning and education. That’s what makes Thinkery Connect, a unique museum-community-research partnership, so special. Led by UT Austin Professor and Researcher, Dr. Cristine Legare and her team of researchers, Thinkery Connect has contributed to more than 50 scientific papers and fifteen years of research that has put Thinkery at the cutting edge of innovations in the development of scientific reasoning and learning. Thinkery infuses these findings in its professional development, Little Thinkers Preschool, and through idea exchanges with Central Texas’s leaders in early childhood education.

Next time you’re at Meredith Learning Lab, stop by Thinkery’s HQ under the stairs to see what is new!
On December 7th, we welcomed Thinkery’s friends and supporters back to the museum for Spark After Dark, an evening of learning, playing, and giving to support the Open Door Initiative. Every aspect of the night was intentional – from the aesthetic that gave the museum a “glow up” and sparked excitement, and the activities that mirrored those we develop for our young learners, to the thoughtful selection and compensation of our food vendors. We were delighted to showcase Thinkery’s efforts to make inspirational learning available for ALL children in Central Texas. Thanks to the generosity of many, we raised over $150,000 at Spark!

Mark your calendars for 2022’s Spark After Dark: October 18th!
How to receive an invitation: Become a Thinkery supporter at the $500 level in 2022.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

AETNA, JACKSON WALKER, NI, TEXAS MUTUAL, ANTONELLI’S CHEESE SHOP, BIG SWIG, POEMA CAVA, STILL AUSTIN WHISKEY CO., SIETE FAMILY FOODS, RON COLLINS LIGHTING DESIGN, ATX EVENT SYSTEMS, AUSTIN BUSINESS JOURNAL, AND ORIGIN HOTELS

Financial Impact of COVID

Navigating a pandemic was hard, but Thinkery rose to the challenge. We acted swiftly to carefully steward the resources entrusted to us.

PANDEMIC IMPACT:
- Revenue in FY20 and FY21 was down over 60% compared to FY19.
- General Admission closures
- Membership renewal extensions
- Camp refunds

WE ACTED FAST:
- Launched the Preschool in fall 2020, only months after the start of the pandemic
- Extended Membership renewals
- Made hard but necessary reductions to personnel and operating costs

WE CAREFULLY STEWARDED THE RESOURCES WE HAD AT THE START OF THE PANDEMIC:
- Thinkery entered the pandemic with no debt obligations, cash in reserves, and endowment investments
- We leveraged ownership of the Meredith Learning Lab to open a line of credit to serve as a safety net
- Worked with our closest donors and funders to convert restricted gifts to general operating support

While we remained innovative and steadfast to weather one of the most difficult moments of Thinkery’s history, we couldn’t have emerged in such a strong position without critical relief funding from the Payroll Protection Program, Texas Workforce Commission Child Care Relief, and the City of Austin’s Non-Profit Relief Grant.
2020-21 Financial Summary

REVENUE
- Museum Admissions: $941,299
- Program Fees: $601,249
- Grants/Contributions: $757,144
- Investments/Other: $1,173,392
- TOTAL: $3,473,084

EXPENSES
- Program Services: $2,603,913
- Fundraising: $416,626
- Admin: $451,345
- TOTAL: $3,471,884

The generosity and support of our Members, donors, and key program funders make Thinkery’s philanthropic mission possible. It is only thanks to the contributions of individuals, companies, and foundations we can continue equipping and inspiring young learners throughout Central Texas.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR AMAZING SUPPORT.
Annual Donors

$100,000 +
City of Austin Cultural Arts Division
LEGO Systems, Inc.
NI

$25,000 – 99,999
Association of Children’s Museums
Capital One
City Of Austin Economic Development Department
Genevieve and Ward Orsinger Foundation
Harry E. and Eda L. Montandon Charitable Trust
The Powell Foundation
Riki Rushing and Allen Gilmer
St. David’s Foundation
Silicon Laboratories, Inc.
Texas Mutual Insurance Company

$10,000 – 24,999
Anonymous
Applied Materials Foundation
Association of Science and Technology Centers
Austin Community Foundation
Bank of America
Cortney and Max Zieky
Daniel and Stephanie Cooley
Dell Technologies
Google Fiber

H-E-B Grocery Company LP
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Keystone Bank
Kim Storin and Bernd Lienhard
Lisa Henken Ramirez and Randy Ramirez
MilliporeSigma
Mint Builders LLC
Pinnergy, Ltd.
Scott and Chelsea Hanson
Texas Capital Bank
United Way for Greater Austin
Webber Family Foundation

$5,000 – 9,999
3M Foundation
Aetna
Anita and Scot Salmon
Blackbaud, Inc.
Carole and Kelley Knutson
Dewayne Quinn and Lauren Mistretta
Jason and Kristin Green
John and Kendall Antonelli
Julia and Owen Harrod
Justin Smith
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Michelle Moore Smith
and Netspend
Annual Donors

Samsung Austin Semiconductor
Theodore P. Davis Charitable Trust
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William Russ

$1,000 – 4,999
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Mandana Varahrami
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Marsha and Mike Dyson
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Mitchell Williams Law Firm
Nancy and Larry Rich
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Pat Pilkington
Rakhee Jain Desai and Rahul Desai
Ryan and Kristen Wynn
Shaleiah Fox and Reid Drapp
Snacks Family
Target
Texas Women In Business
Timothy Shook
Topfer Family Foundation
Vera R. Campbell Foundation
YiShaun and Jonathan Yang
Zara and Cody Oakes
2021-22 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Daniel Cooley, President – Silicon Labs
Lisa Zapalac, Past President – Long-View Micro School and The Number Lab
John Antonelli, President Elect – Antonelli’s Cheese Shop
Lisa Ramirez, Secretary – Indeed.com
Ryan Parks, Treasurer – DK Partners PC

MEMBERS AT LARGE
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Drew Bixby – Liftr Insights
Rakhee Jain Desai – Artist
Carolina de Onis – UT/A&M Investment Management Co.
Jason Green – NI
Julia Harrod – MWM Design Group
Bernd Lienhard – VORAGO Technologies
Malini Rajput – Capital One
Michelle Moore Smith – Jackson Walker
Bryan St. George – Keystone Bank
Max Zieky – Dell Technologies

Help Support Our Mission!
As a philanthropic organization, we are grateful for the incredible support of our donors. If you are looking to deepen your connection to your community, consider including Thinkery in your philanthropic giving.

INDIVIDUAL GIVING:
There are many ways to support Thinkery as an individual. You can give outright, through stock transfers, IRA distributions, donor advised funds, or through estate planning.

CORPORATE/BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS:
Corporate and business sponsorships can support the areas of greatest need at Thinkery and align with your philanthropic priorities. We work with our corporate and business partners to co-create recognition packages and marketing campaigns that tell compelling stories rooted in generosity.

EVENT SPONSORSHIP:
Thinkery holds signature events throughout the year that can provide excellent brand visibility and recognition opportunities. Ready to give or learn more about support opportunities that align with your priorities and equip the next generation of creative problem solvers?

GIVE ONLINE AT www.thinkeryaustin.org/support-us

EMAIL AT development@thinkeryaustin.org
Thank you for your continued support!

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