Darth Vader, Spiderman and Sailor Moon Walk into a Library: Adapting Cosplay for the Public Library Setting

Presented by:
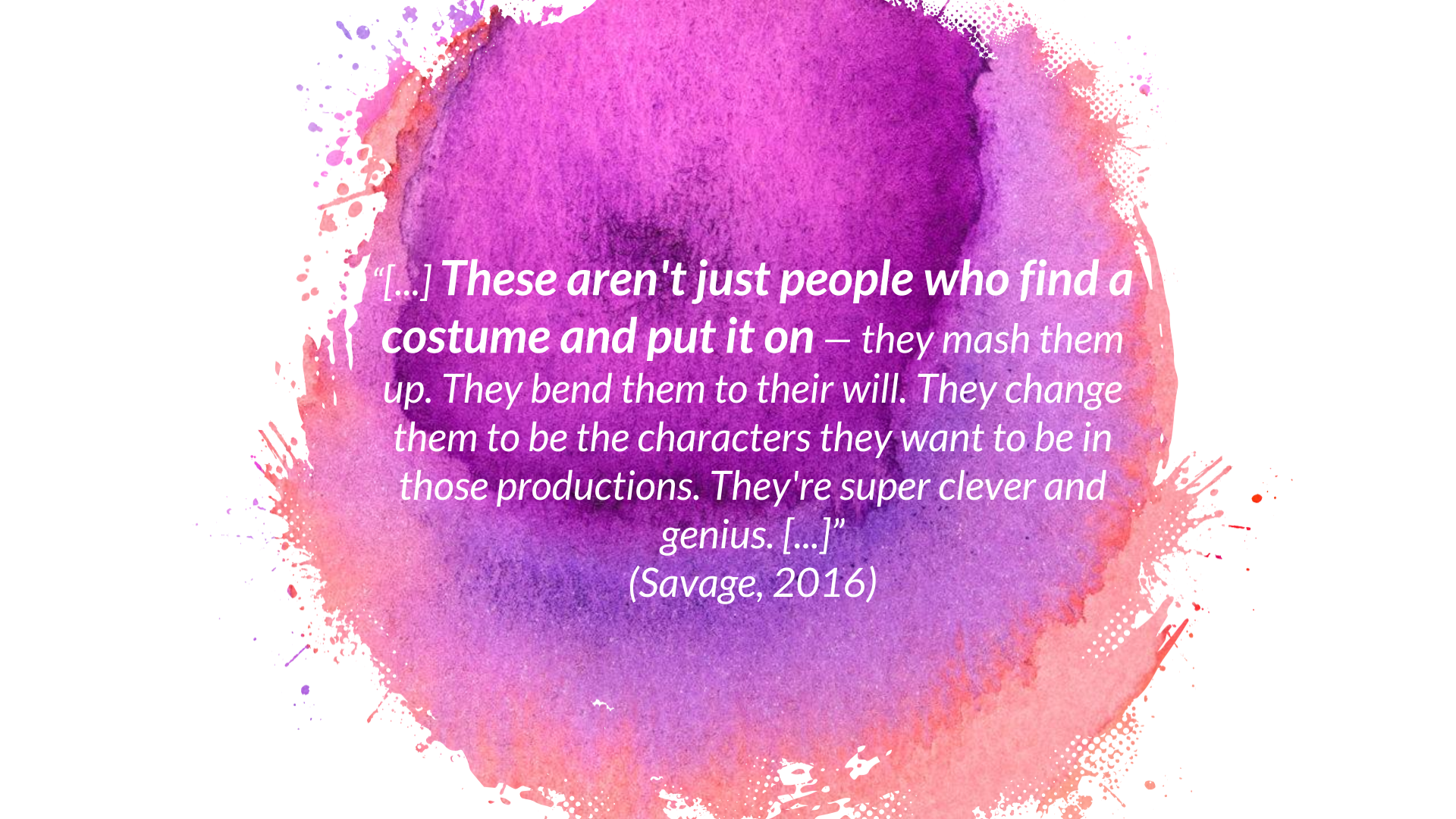Elizabeth Linville, Jessica Marple, Pamela Ridley & Robin Wells

Outline

- What is Cosplay?
- How do People Engage in Cosplay?
- Cosplay and the Text
- Cosplay in the Library

What is Cosplay?

- "[..] the costume playing of characters taken from anime, manga, game and movie narratives" (Truong, 2013, Introduction, para. 7).

- "[Cosplay] describes a performative action in which one dons a costume and/or accessories and manipulates his or her posture, gesture, or language in order to generate meaningful correspondences and contrast between a given body and a set of texts from which it is modeled and made to relate" (Hale, 2014, p. 8).

"[...] **These aren't just people who find a costume and put it on** — they mash them up. They bend them to their will. They change them to be the characters they want to be in those productions. They're super clever and genius. [...]"
(Savage, 2016)

How do people engage in cosplay?

- Novices and experts
- Varying levels of commitment
- Buying or making a costume
- Participation in events (conventions, photoshoots, library anime prom)
- Families/individuals/clubs

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Cosplay and the Text

'[...] the motivation for the remediation lies in the desire not only to make visible the source material in medial representations (as would be the case with illustrations for example), but to employ it, to give it bodily presence in the actual world.' (Domsch, 2014, p. 129)

'It is the continuation of this experience, of this emotional attachment, that is certainly part of the motivation for cosplay: the desire to make tangible, to give bodily, three-dimensional presence to a storyworld and its existents beyond its original source text or image.' (Domsch, 2014, p. 130)
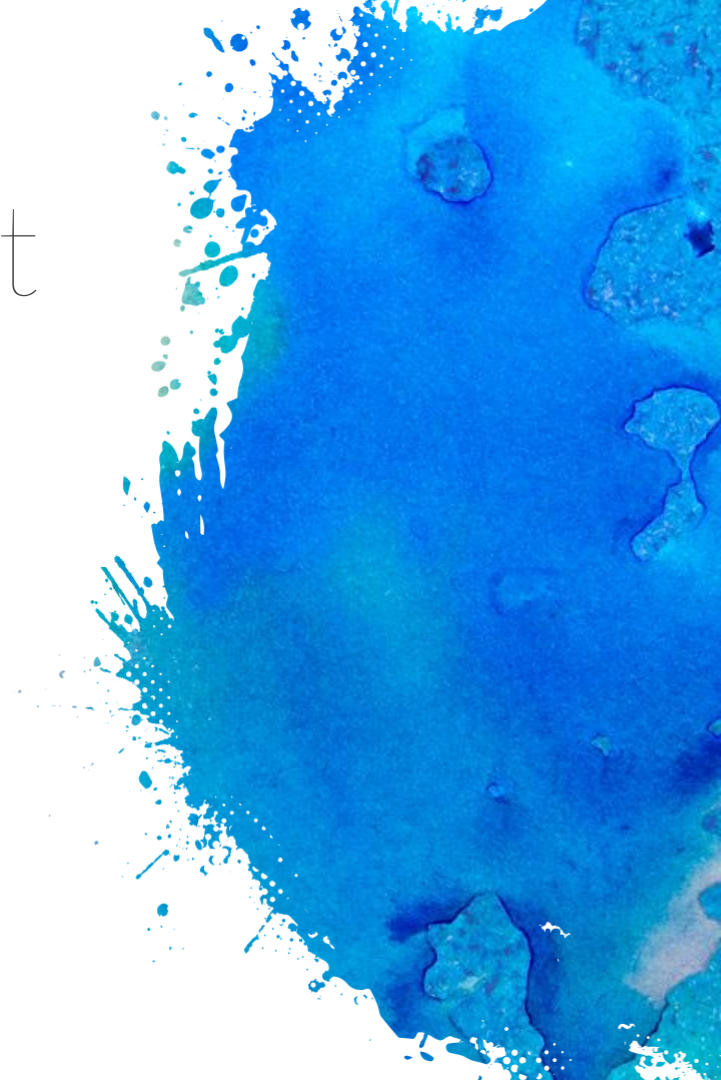
A Photo Captures It All

Cosplay is a type of staged representation, and a camera will capture 'the moment of perfect verisimilitude, very much comparable to turn-of-the-century tableaux vivants[.]' (Domsch, 2014, p. 137)

Interaction With the Text

Cosplayers can interact with their textual inspiration in different ways:

- Discrete vs generic character
- Generative vs textual transformation cosplay
- Genderbending
- Crossplay
- Combining texts

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Why Cosplay in the Library?

- Consider what they CFLA and the ALA suggest the role of the public library is in the community, and how you might understand it
- To answer this question, you may need to ask yourself what you think the purpose of your public library is
  - Take a look at your vision and mission statement
  - Think about the goals your library has set for itself

Why Cosplay in the Library?

- Create connections
  - Showcase a piece of your collection and connect your audience to materials they may not have seen before
- Build community
  - Cosplayers love to talk about cosplay. Let experts help newbies, Darth Vaders compare costumes, and new friendships form
- Develop STEAM skills
  - those costumes aren't going to design and make themselves

Why Cosplay in the Library?

- Create access
  - Not everyone in your community may be able to make it to the larger cons, especially if you are not located in a large city
  - Not everyone knows where to start with cosplaying
  - A makerspace and/or "library of things" may make possible an otherwise unaffordable costume

For example...

Three levels of cosplay programming in libraries:

- One-off workshops
- Ongoing clubs
- Larger events/conventions

Consider:

- The unique needs of your community
- Staff time and knowledge
- Financial support

http://www.slcolibrary.org/teen/toshoCon/imageGallery

One off workshops:

- Raymond Public Library's *Custom Made for Cosplay*
- Strathcona County Library Bookmobile's *Cosplay Build Party*

On-going clubs

- Berks County Public Library *Cosplay Club*
- Regina Public Library's *Manga Club*

Conventions

- Salt Lake County's *ToshoCon*

Conclusion

Cosplay is much more than dress-up: it is a way of interacting and exploring beloved texts and even aspects of your own identity.

Public libraries are in a unique position to help facilitate cosplay activities, and to create connections within the community.

Questions?

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