

Creative fun at Remake Photos



Editing



Ishi getting ready for photo shoot



1...2...3...Jump



Selecting a photo



Ishi jumping with the wild dolphin

“Do you want to ride the dolphin?” Librarian Nicole Harding is sitting in front of a computer, talking to a ten-year-old girl with a long, brown ponytail.

“No, I want to jump,” Ishi insists, as she studies a digital photograph of two dolphins leaping through the air above a crystal blue ocean. “That would be cool,” she says in a sweet, small voice.

All the kids who have come to the South Fayette Township Library in the last couple of days know that at Remake Photos, anything is possible. All it takes is a creative mind and a little technology. The library is hosting this event for Remake Learning Days and Nicole and her colleagues have been combining both creativity and technology to show kids how to make a fun, photographic mashup by inserting their image into another photo.

Behind us, lights and a camera on a tripod point toward a huge, green cloth draped over a metal frame almost as tall as the ceiling. Nicole, who also serves as the Youth Services Coordinator, tells me that the library received a grant to purchase the green screen, scanner, memory cards, and other materials required to construct this makeshift photography studio. They didn’t need to buy special software because the GNU Image Manipulation Program, commonly known as GIMP, is free, downloadable and perfectly suited for this project.

I’m still not sure how it’s all going to work, but Ishi and her father are happy to let me watch.

Her first task is to select the photo she wants to appear in, but Nicole warns her that the photo of the two wild dolphins isn’t going to work.

“That one is pretty pixelated,” Nicole explains. “See all the red and blue in there?” She clicks on another photo. “What about this one?”

“I like it.” Ishi selects the photo of a single dolphin bounding above a dramatic splash of water.

So now it’s time for her photo shoot.

As Nicole turns on the lights and adjusts the camera, Ishi takes her place in front of the wall of green fabric. Suddenly, she wonders if she wore the right clothing for the shoot.

“Are some of my pants going to disappear because some of it is green?” Ishi asks, noticing the colorful pattern on her leggings.

“I think it will be fine,” Nicole reassures her.

Ishi learns that if she wants to look like she’s gambling with a dolphin in the ocean, she has to jump. Literally.

“Do you know ballet?” Nicole asks.

Ishi nods yes.

“Do second position.”

Ishi positions herself with her feet pointed out.

“One...two...three... JUMP!”

Ishi jumps so high her hands go out of the picture and she

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has to do it again. After several minutes and lots of jumping, Nicole thinks they have enough photos for Ishi to select the shot she wants to use for her mashup. She pops the memory card into the computer and now images of Ishi leaping in front of the green background form rows across the screen. Nicole points out ones that are blurry or aren't centered to narrow down Ishi's choices.

In my opinion, they're all adorable.

Nicole demonstrates how the software enhances and rotates the images to prepare for the next step, which happens next door in the main room. Holding a flash drive containing several jumping poses, Ishi follows Nicole to a row of cubicle work spaces and sits down in front of another computer. Several library employees scurry from one cubicle to another to show kids how to use GIMP to "cut out" their images and superimpose them on their selected pictures.

Ishi focuses on the task. Slowly and steadily, she moves the mouse, almost imperceptibly, to draw small lines from one point to another. She moves and cuts until the jumping girl is finally freed from the field of green and Ishi positions the figure into the action scene. Within minutes, Ishi produces a picture of her smiling and leaping side by side with a wild dolphin.

Nicole says that the library intends to use the new equipment for more fun programs and projects for both kids and adults.

As Ishi suggests, I think "that would be cool." ■

Writer, teacher, and speaker, Ann K. Howley, is currently writing a young adult novel.



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