

SPARKIN' ART

Tech Assets

When running a digital arts program, it's important to consider what platforms you will use, and how these will help shape (and be shaped by!) your project.

With the wealth of tools, websites, and file-sharing platforms available online, it's easy to become overwhelmed with different options. However, the easiest way to select your software is by thinking about it like a toolbox. Just like a hammer will be the right tool to secure a nail, and a wrench to tighten a bolt, make a list of **what you need to do**, and **what tools can help you do it**. From there, you can determine which tools are the most accessible and user-friendly for your team and participants.

Let's take a look at a few of Sparkin' Art's tech assets as an example...

NEED: Internal documentation & organization

TOOLS: Google Drive; Notion

Google Drive is a free file-sharing platform connected to Google accounts, such as GMail. Similar to the folders you might find on your computer, Drive allows you to create, upload, and organize files into folders and share them with your colleagues. With Google Drive you can even edit Google Docs (word documents), Google Sheets (spreadsheet app similar to Excel), and other types of documents in real-time with collaborators. For Sparkin' Art, we created an internal folder with subfolders for communications assets, team meeting and workshop agendas, project files, contracts, etc. We also launched our registration and open mic submission forms using Google Forms, another kind of document you can create in Drive.

If, for any reason, you do not want to or are unable to use Google Drive, some alternatives might include **Microsoft OneDrive** or **DropBox**.

Notion is a shareable database tool which expands the functionality of standard spreadsheets, offering collaborators the ability to tag, colour-code, and sort information into different formats (or "views"). We used Notion to track outreach with community partners, and to review potential video call software for our workshops (see below).

Notion alternatives include **Google Sheets** (part of Drive), or **AirTable**

NEED: Meeting Platform

TOOL: Zoom

To host our digital studio, Sparkin' Art needed a video-call platform that was low-cost, accessible, and multi-functional. Upon reviewing platforms available at the time (early 2021), we determined that **Zoom** would best serve our needs. Using a Zoom Pro account, we were able to schedule and generate links for each of our workshops in advance, and participants could join using both desktop and mobile apps, or directly in their internet browser. On Zoom, the meeting

host can control how participants can interact in the space, such as turning their cameras and microphones on and off, text-based chat functions, auto-generated closed captioning and transcription, and screen-sharing in order to communally view content like videos and music. We also utilized Zoom's virtual background, filter, view and recording functions to creatively change how participants appeared onscreen, and to record our workshops and voice over lines.

Some Zoom alternatives are listed in our [Notion](#) (accurate as of January 2021).

NEED: Centralized Information (External)

TOOL: Website

In order to house our schedule, archives, and project information and to make them publicly available beyond the scope of the project, we decided that Sparkin' Art needed a website. If anyone on your team is particularly HTML or CSS-savvy, you're in luck -- otherwise, you may want to use a form-fill website builder, such as **Wix**, **Wordpress**, or **Squarespace**. Building sparkinart.com on Wix, we can drag and drop text and content sections, galleries, and embedded content from external sources across customizable pages on the site. Pages and content can be updated in real time, and you can choose the aesthetic layout, fonts, and colour scheme that best represents your project. While Wix does offer free plans, we chose to purchase our domain on GoDaddy.com in order to make our site cleaner and search engine-friendly. In addition, we could create events in Wix that linked to our Sparkin' Art digital studio workshops -- giving our participants an alternate access point should they miss the Zoom links we sent out every week. To view our website, check out sparkinart.com

NEED: Realtime Idea-Sharing

TOOL: Miro

In our Digital Studio workshops, we wanted to recreate the immediacy of in-person collaboration. We used the online whiteboard software **Miro** to create interactive idea webs, share YouTube clips, photos, and other artistic inspiration, and map out our choose-your-own adventure video series. Each week, we'd set up a digital playspace for notes to be taken and invited our facilitators and participants to incorporate this technology into our story-building exercises. On the free plan of Miro, you can create an unlimited number of whiteboards, but can only retain editing privileges to the most recent 3 that you've made. To view a sample of how we used Miro for our Workshops and Town Hall, check out our website at sparkinart.com

Alternatives to Miro include **MURAL**, **StormBoard**, and **JamBoard** (on Google Drive)

NEED: Graphic Design

TOOL: Canva

In order to create informative, eye-catching graphics for things like social media, and our choose-your-own-adventure project, we used **Canva**. Canva is an easy to use, browser based,

image creation software that comes pre-loaded with different images, fonts, effects, and design templates. It also allows you to share your designs with teammates & collaborators, so you can edit & receive feedback in real time. There is plenty you can do and see in the free version of the program. However, if you would like to take advantage of the different Canva 'Pro' images & effects, upgrading is easy & affordable.

Alternatives to Canva include **Visme**, and **Easil**.