

# Directors' Day

By Ross Tyner.

The 2011 BC Library Conference included the second annual Directors' Day, a full-day professional development session aimed at library directors and senior managers from all types of libraries. In a change from 2010, this year's Directors' Day was part of the Thursday pre-conference, which gave directors the opportunity to participate more fully in Friday and Saturday conference activities.

## Facilitators

The workshop was led by Jane Dysart and Rebecca Jones of Dysart & Jones. Jane and Rebecca are experienced and well-respected facilitators who have worked with many library groups, as well as with other public and private sector organizations, in a variety of capacities (e.g. coaching, training, and strategic planning).

## Objectives

The objectives stated in the outline of the session were to provide leaders with ideas and insights on:

- Increasing clarity in problem solving and strategic focus
- Influencing and gaining stakeholders' real commitment
- Realizing substantial changes that demand tough choices

In advance of the session, participants had been asked to read five articles related to the above themes. (See reading list at the end of this report).

## Gaining commitment – Ken Haycock

Ken Haycock (Follett Chair in Library & Information Science, Dominican University, and Senior Partner, Ken Haycock & Associates) started the session with an engaging and informative presentation on how organizational leaders can be most successful in influencing people and effecting change. A wide range of topics was covered, including John Kotter's principles for leading change, which begin with establishing a sense of urgency. Many of the topics were linked by their emphasis on the value of relationships, with one of the conclusions of the workshop being that "the relationship is the message."

## Leading change – Michael Edson

Michael Edson (Director of Web & New Media Strategy, Smithsonian Institution) joined the workshop via Skype. His presentation, "Decisions: Are They Ever Easy?", revolved around three key questions leaders must ask themselves: "What is the world I'm living in?"; "What role does my organization want to play?"; and "What should I do?" He used the metaphor of the thermocline<sup>1</sup> to describe situations in which two groups have different assumptions, experience and perspectives about the same idea or issue (e.g. technology), leading to distorted communication. He went on to describe the fascinating process – including a "talk to wiki" methodology – he used to develop the Smithsonian's Web and New Media Strategy. Much more information is available on Michael's Slideshare site – [www.slideshare.net/edsonm](http://www.slideshare.net/edsonm) – and on the Smithsonian Commons – [www.si.edu/commons](http://www.si.edu/commons).

## Introducing change – Barbara Greeniaus

Barbara Greeniaus (Executive Advisor, Corporate Communications & Change Management, BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General) led an interactive session on organizational change and the way it affects individuals. She described different processes organizations and individuals undergo during times of change, which can be traumatic for some people.

## Putting the concepts to work

The final portion of the day was dedicated to group discussion and individual reflection about ways in which participants can use the concepts covered during the workshop in their own organizations. The discussion returned to one of the themes raised by Ken Haycock in his morning session, the need to create a sense of urgency by challenging people to consider future scenarios.

## Outcomes

On the whole, the objectives of the workshop were achieved. The day featured inspiring speakers, innovative ideas, stimulating discussions, and the opportunity to network with peers. Based on the success of this year's workshop, a 3<sup>rd</sup> annual

<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermocline>

Directors' Day is a likely event for the 2012 conference.

### Reading List

Julia Adler-Milstein, Sara J. Singer, & Michael W. Toffel (2010). *Speaking up constructively: Managerial practices that elicit solutions from front-line employees*. Harvard Business School Working Paper 11-005. <http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/11-005.pdf>.

Stewart D. Friedman (2008 April). "Be a better leader, have a richer life." *Harvard Business Review*: 112-118.

John Hamm (2006 May). "The five messages leaders must manage." *Harvard Business Review*: 115-123.

Jim Heskett (2010 December 2). "Making right choices: Art or science?" *HBS Working Knowledge*. <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/6475.html>.

"The language of persuasion." (2008 February 27). *Harvard Management Update*. <http://blogs.hbr.org/hmu/2008/02/the-language-of-persuasion.html>.

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