

Changing Times: Inspiring Libraries Summit

By Jay Peters & Faith Jones.

The Changing Times: Inspiring Libraries Summit, held Dec. 6th and 7th in Vancouver, was hosted by BCLA, the School of Library, Archival & Information Studies: The iSchool @ UBC, and Libraries and Literacy, BC Ministry of Education. Two of the many highlights were the keynote speaker Ken Roberts and plenary speaker David Lankes. Video and workshop material from the Summit are available at <http://commons.bclibraries.ca/inspiringlibraries2012/>

Ken Roberts

By Jay Peters

Ken Roberts kicked off this summit and what a kick it was! He makes you want to listen, as he is very relaxed and able to get his point across meaningfully and with feeling without becoming evangelical. His talk was alive with really good metaphors and beautiful slides.

He began by referring to the old story of the six blind men and the elephant (in which each blind man touches a different part of the elephant, which causes disagreement when they debrief because they have conflicting impressions) to remind us that he is merely one 'blind man' and that this is his impression. He said that if we combine our impressions we will have a better view of the future.

He showed the four-continuum model from a briefing paper released in June 2011 by ALA called *Confronting the Future: Strategic Visions for the 21st Century Public Library*:

Physical	<--->	Virtual
Individual	<--->	Communal
Collection	<--->	Creation
Portal	<--->	Archive

He asked us to consider where we currently are for each category and where we would like to be. He used the model as a springboard for talking about current trends.

Physical ----> Virtual

Publishing is going through a fundamental change and first-time authors have always been money-

losers. Ebooks allow publishing of more authors as well as backlists without outlaying as much cash.

He also said, "Many people who currently express disdain for electronic books will soon be reading them" (Roberts, 2012).

Roberts suggested that ebooks "will soon begin to morph into something far different from the printed book, just as the horseless carriage developed into something far different from the horse-drawn buggy" (Roberts, 2012). Nonfiction ebooks especially have great potential for innovation.

'Transliteracy' is the first new art form of the 21st century.

Information ---> Imagination

Nonfiction used to circulate more, but now fiction does, as people become more interested in works of the imagination.

Consumption ---> Creation

At a Copenhagen library it is possible to make music with friends and strangers with musical instruments (and headphones) lying in a hallway for the public to use--no booking is necessary.

Makerspaces and Fab Labs are at the same part of their evolution as the early stages of PC 7 Home brew clubs. Libraries were some of the first places to make computers and Internet access available; now some libraries are providing the tools of production.

Consumption ---> Collaboration

He showed a slide of public use computer stations separate and all facing the same way, contrasted to a slide of a formation of computers for collaborative use. There is definitely a movement away from quiet use of computers in libraries. Roberts said, "we need to create spaces that work, not rules which don't."

Quality Spaces

In the old days public libraries looked cheap so that taxpayers would think their money was being spent wisely. Nowadays people want a library to be proud of even if they do not use it. Street space sells the library and having workspaces near windows show the library is being used.

Providing wi-fi to the community may make a greater impact than only providing it within library walls.

Open Data

We should consider licensing databases for the entire province.

These are just some of the highlights. Do see Ken Roberts speak whenever you can. He makes the future sound friendly.

Roberts, Ken. *Facing the Future: A Vision Document for British Columbia's Public Libraries*. 2012. <http://bit.ly/U5sYLx> (the basis for his talk.)

Roberts' PowerPoint presentation: <http://bit.ly/Xl62sx>

Watch Roberts at the Summit: <http://bit.ly/Slf5M8>

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David Lankes

By Faith Jones

David Lankes was the plenary speaker for the Summit. Lankes is a professor at University of Syracuse's School of Information Studies, and has recently made waves in the library world with his book and companion website, *The Atlas of New Librarianship*.

As readers of the *Atlas* may be aware, Lankes urges the profession to think less about "libraries" as a conceptual framework, and focus instead on people and society. In his plenary speech, Lankes suggested that even by framing our question as "What is the future of libraries?" we may be limiting our own ability to envision possibilities. He asked the audience to

consider instead, "What should be the future of libraries and librarians in a democracy?" This allows us to stop thinking in terms of what is going to happen to us, and to focus on what we are going to do.

Lankes points out that librarians' worldview shapes how we will answer this question, and warns us that this is often a good thing (that is, since librarians generally hold that more, good information is better than less, partial or wrong information), but can also be a constraint—especially if we do not examine our assumptions from time to time. Sometimes the community we serve holds outdated notions of libraries, and this can also cause friction if we are seen as moving too far from our traditional mandate.

Nonetheless, "a good library shapes itself around a community and not vice versa," Lankes said. We need to reject what he called the "deficit model" of service provision: the idea that there is something missing or wrong with the community which we can fix. He also urged librarians to reject the consumer model, because what we provide does not get used up. Instead, he said, "the library is a platform for community innovation and change."

For example, if we conceive of the library not as a centre of teaching but as a two-way centre of learning, in which library members are able to teach themselves, library staff, and each other, then we see the library as a place of participation rather than observation. As another example, library members may be both readers and writers. In this way we can stop thinking about our services in traditional terms such as the physical building or our collection. "Our collection is our community," he said.

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