

Your Guide to Powerful Conversations

NEXT *A Library Futures
Symposium*

October 21 – 22, 2010 | Edmonton

Thanks to the NEXT Symposium Advisory Committee members for their guidance, suggestions, and support:

Bonnie Gray, Alberta Municipal Affairs Public Library Services

Dean Frey, Red Deer Public Library

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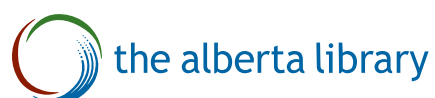
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We gratefully acknowledge the support of our corporate partners:



The *NEXT Symposium* is delivered by The Alberta Library, with the support of Alberta Municipal Affairs Public Library Services.



Contents

Welcome to <i>NEXT</i>	2
Schedule at a Glance	3
What's <i>NEXT</i> ?	4
Setting the stage	5
Michael Adams	6
Thomas Frey	8
Mike D'Abramo	10
Patricia Graham	12
R. David Lankes	14
Shaping the future	16
Continuing the conversation	19
Resources for exploring deeper conversations	20



Welcome to *NEXT: A Library Futures Symposium!*

What will libraries of the future look like?

What are the current trends that are most likely to affect libraries?

How can members of the library community think and act strategically to take advantage of emerging opportunities?

NEXT is your opportunity to address these and other important questions impacting the future of Alberta libraries.

Challenge your assumptions. See new perspectives. Actively explore questions that matter with leading thinkers in the library community. And gain insights and ideas that will drive the strategic thinking and planning of your organization.

Participate in the community discussion about library futures:

- at www.libraryfutures.ca
- on Twitter at #libfu

Check out www.albertalibraries.ca, a valuable source for Alberta's library community, a place to get information to deliver services, and a place to host a conversation about Alberta libraries.

Schedule at a Glance | times approximate

Setting the Stage

Thursday, October 21st

- 7:30 am Breakfast in the ballroom
- 8:30 am Welcome to *NEXT: A Library Futures Symposium*
- 9:00 am Michael Adams
The Shape of Things to Come: Where We're Going and Why it Matters
- 10:30 am Thomas Frey
The Age of Enlightenment and the Library of the Future
- 11:30 am Lunch in the ballroom
to 12:30 pm
- 12:30 pm Mike D'Abramo
The Influence of Young Canadians
- 1:45 pm Patricia Graham
Crossing the Digital Divide: Exceeding Expectations in a 24/7 World
- 3:15 pm R. David Lankes
The Librarian Militant, The Librarian Triumphant
- 4:15 pm Closing comments
- 5:00 pm Reception in Café Lacombe
to 6:30 pm

Day Two: Shaping the Future

Friday, October 22nd

- 7:30 am Breakfast in the ballroom
- 8:15 am Welcome to the Discovery Café
- 8:45 am Small group discussions
to 10:15 am
- 10:15 am Coffee break
to 10:45 am
- 10:45 am Small group discussions
to 12:30 pm
- 12:30 pm Lunch in the ballroom
to 1:30 pm
- 1:30 pm Small group discussions focusing
to 2:45 pm on questions you want to explore
- 2:45 pm NEXT steps - symposium wrap up
to 3:15 pm (and prize draws!)





The future is not what it used to be

“The problem with the future is that it keeps becoming the present.” - Calvin (of Calvin and Hobbes)

Thinking about the future can be a tricky business.

On one hand, it can conjure images of personal jet packs, paperless offices and limitless leisure time – predictions that never quite came to pass.

On the other hand, thinking about the future is one of the most practical things we can do. It gives us new perspectives and context for decisions we have to make today and helps us deal directly with a dilemma at the heart of strategic planning: the future cannot be predicted, yet we have to make choices based on the uncertainty of what is to come.

Also, by focusing on what’s next, we have an opportunity to think about our preferred future. This is essential because, as Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you may end up somewhere else.”

What’s NEXT?

The *NEXT Symposium* is an opportunity to think deeply about future scenarios and what we can do to prepare. It creates the possibility of finding creative solutions and seizing new opportunities.

NEXT is designed to build connections and build community, while sparking innovation, learning and creativity. The symposium will lead to articulating an overall road map for libraries across Alberta and contribute to a strategic vision of all libraries in the province.

The symposium will also inform The Alberta Library’s strategic planning process.

Day One: Setting the stage

The *NEXT Symposium* is an opportunity to think about the major cultural, demographic, social and economic shifts that are likely to affect libraries in the coming years.

In addition to bringing your own perspectives based on your observations of the world around you, day one of the symposium features five world-renowned keynote speakers who will share their insights and ideas on how our world is changing, and what it means for the library community.

This is an invitation to step back from your everyday, problem-solving mode of thinking and step into a deeper, more creative frame of mind that allows new perspectives to emerge. It's about openness, and a willingness to explore new possibilities and new alternatives.

**This is an invitation
to step back from
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This mindset is a balance between the reality of current challenges and longer-term questions such as — What are we really trying to create? What is the bigger picture? Why does what we're doing really matter?

Speakers on day one will challenge our assumptions and preconceptions and encourage us to examine questions we may be avoiding, creating a context for conversations on day two.



Featured Speaker: Michael Adams



The Shape of Things to Come: Where We're Going and Why it Matters

Michael Adams, co-founder and President of Environics Research Group, offers insights and analysis on how current trends are likely to play out in the future, using up-to-the-moment polling data on issues such as health care, taxes and immigration.

Adams' insightful and humorous take on Canada's enduring quirks and urgent dilemmas will include material from his upcoming book, *Stayin' Alive: How Canada's Baby Boomers Will Work, Play and Find Meaning in the Second Half of their Adult Lives*, to be published in November by Penguin.



Some things to consider:

What is my major insight or discovery in this presentation?

What surprises me about this presentation?

What makes me uncomfortable?

What squares with my beliefs?

What challenges my beliefs?

What do I want to find out more about?

What has the most implications for libraries?

What do I want to share with my colleagues?

Does this suggest a need for strategic partnerships?
What kind?

Notes on Michael Adams

These ideas
(check as many
as you like):

engaged me

challenged me

surprised me

dazzled me

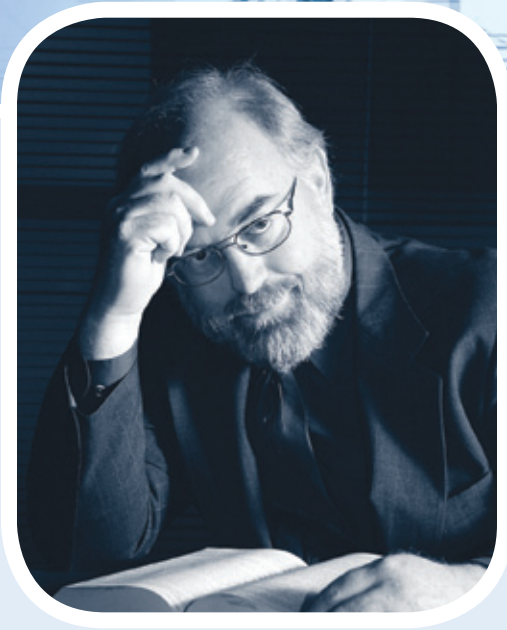
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Featured Speaker: **Thomas Frey**



The Age of Enlightenment and the Library of the Future

Thomas Frey is the Executive Director of the DaVinci Institute, a non-profit think tank based in Colorado. His talks have inspired leaders in diverse organizations, including NASA, AT&T, IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Bell Canada, Visa, Ford Motor Company, Times of India and many more. Frey works with the DaVinci Institute's Senior Fellows and Board of Visionaries to develop original research studies, which enables him to speak on translating trends into opportunities.



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Featured Speaker: **Mike D'Abramo**



The Influence of Young Canadians

Mike D'Abramo is an internationally recognized expert on youth and technology trends and has assisted major corporations, government ministries and non-profit organizations with broadening their reach to the youth demographic. As Director of Youthography, a youth market research firm, D'Abramo consulted on market research, strategic planning, brand development and advertising. He is currently a strategist with Toronto-based research firm Fresh Squeezed Ideas.



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Featured Speaker: Patricia Graham



Crossing the Digital Divide: Exceeding Expectations in a 24/7 World

Patricia Graham is the Editor-in-Chief of the Vancouver Sun and has also held positions as reporter, columnist, copy editor and newsroom manager. During her career, she's seen the influence of technological innovations and provides her insights on the shift in mindset required for the digital age. Graham is also a television and radio commentator and a lecturer at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of British Columbia.



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Featured Speaker: R. David Lankes



The Librarian Militant, The Librarian Triumphant

R. David Lankes is Director of the Information Institute of Syracuse University, an Associate Professor in the School of Information Studies, and Director of the Library Science program. Lankes is a passionate advocate for libraries and their essential role in today's society. He also seeks to understand how information approaches and technologies can be used to transform industries. An accomplished researcher, author and speaker, his recent work involves how participatory concepts can reshape libraries and credibility.



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Day Two: Shaping the future

“Are we as human beings so immersed in conversation that, like fish in water, conversation is our medium for survival and we just can’t see it?”

David Isaacs, The World Café: Shaping our Future Through Conversations That Matter

Day two of the *NEXT Symposium* is designed to engage community members in focused inquiry and deeper reflection. It is based loosely on a conversational model sometimes called the World Café or Discovery Café (www.theworldcafe.com).

The basic principles are simple, but have been carefully developed to generate new insights and allow the collective intelligence to emerge.

The principles include:

- setting context
- creating a hospitable space
- exploring questions that matter
- encouraging everyone’s contribution
- connecting diverse perspectives
- listening together for insights
- sharing collective discoveries

The café model is successful when people feel they are contributing their thinking to questions that are important to them. Discussion questions for day two are designed to generate energy, focus inquiry and open new possibilities. You will also have the opportunity to formulate questions that you want to explore.

As you engage others in conversation, it may help to consider insights and ideas from a particular perspective. What is important for the future survival, the future success, and the future transformation of libraries?

When thinking about the future, it also helps to have a general timeframe. Anything less than five years tends to encourage an over-estimation of potential changes. Anything more than 15 years can make questions about the future irrelevant to the strategic planning process.

What is important for the future survival, the future success, and the future transformation of libraries?

One of the most important elements in the success of these conversations is our ability to be present and listen to each other. It's a bit like playing in a jazz band. Jazz musicians generally agree that the best players are the best listeners, because they're able to play off whatever is being offered by other musicians in the band.

In their book *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*, Peter Senge, Director of the Centre for Organizational Learning at MIT, and Otto Scharmer, a senior lecturer at MIT, noted:

"We've come to believe that the core capacity for accessing the field of the future is presence. We first thought of presence as being fully conscious and aware of the present moment. Then we began to appreciate presence as deep listening, of being open beyond one's pre-conceptions and historical ways of making sense."

"We came to see the importance of letting go of old identities and need to control ... Ultimately, we came to see all aspects of presence as leading to a state of 'letting come,' of consciously participating in a larger field for change. When this happens, the field shifts, and the forces shaping a situation can shift from recreating the past to manifesting or realizing an emerging future."



Some suggestions for being present and listening deeply:

- Try to maintain the perspective that whatever happens in the discussions is what needs to happen.
- Do not be afraid of a little chaos. Especially early in the process, it is natural for the conversation to jump around because people want to get involved and express their views. Chaos can create space for new ideas to emerge.
- Be comfortable with silence. These are usually moments when people are thinking or reflecting. When silence is allowed to end naturally, what follows is often richer than if it were interrupted prematurely.
- Try to notice when your attention has wandered. Do not judge yourself or others. Gently bring your attention back to what people are saying.
- Allow all voices to be heard so the collective intelligence can surface. Try to listen to all points of view, without an agenda.
- Speak from your heart, and from personal experience. Go for honesty and depth, but keep it brief.

Other guidelines for deeper conversations:

- Only one person talks at a time.
- Focus on what matters.
- Contribute your thinking.
- Listen for insights, patterns and deeper questions.
- Lighten up and have fun.
- No, really, have fun! Some of the best insights come from a place of playfulness.



Continuing the conversation

***“ Conversation is not just about what is said;
it is also what happens between people ...
It leads to more conversation and is part
of a journey to understand.”***

*Paul Born, Community Conversations: Mobilizing the Ideas, Skills and
Passion of Community Organizations, Governments, Business, and People*

While the *NEXT Symposium* has specific outcomes, including articulating an overall roadmap for libraries across Alberta, it is also designed to build connections and build community.

The symposium is based on the belief that the library community is filled with leaders and, whatever the issue, the community itself has the answers.

The symposium is therefore not just an end in itself, but part of a broader conversation about the future. As a knowledge-based community charting a course in an increasingly information-based society, we must continuously develop our capacity to effectively seek out and listen to the insights and expertise of our colleagues and stakeholders.

We can use the insights and ideas from the symposium in our own strategic planning processes. We can share insights and ideas from the symposium with others in our community and create opportunities for others to come together in conversation about the future.

A library futures website (www.libraryfutures.ca), created by volunteers, will give community members ongoing opportunities to share their observations, ideas and insights. Information from the symposium will be posted on the site, as well as clips of keynote speakers.

A summary of the symposium will be shared with all participants, along with suggestions on how to use the insights and ideas to inform the strategic thinking and planning of your organization and your community. The summary will also be posted on the library futures website for the entire community to read and discuss.

Continuing the conversation is essential. The quality of our engagement with each other will contribute to our future success as individuals, organizations and communities.

Resources for exploring deeper conversations

Following are just a few of the resources that may stimulate your thinking and provide further insights into planning for the future, organizational learning, leadership and change. Some of the leading thinkers in these areas include Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer and Margaret Wheatley.

The World Café

(www.theworldcafe.com) provides resources on supporting the conversational process.

The Society for Organizational Learning

(www.solonline.org) was formed in 1997 to continue the work of MIT's Centre for Organizational Learning and founder Peter Senge.

The Presencing Institute

(www.presencing.com) is a global awareness-based research community for profound social innovation and change.

Open Space Technology

(www.openspaceworld.org) is an approach to hosting meetings, conferences and retreats where participants create and manage their own agenda – enabling the structure of the event to best fit the work being done.

Tamarack, an Institute for Community Engagement

(www.tamarackcommunity.ca), develops and supports collaborative strategies that engage citizens and institutions to address community challenges, and to learn from and share experiences.

The Inquiry Institute

(www.inquiryinstitute.com) provides resources on asking powerful questions, including the top 12 questions for success.



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**Government
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Follow the community discussion at
www.libraryfutures.ca and at www.albertalibraries.ca