

## **Report on Stephen Abram's presentations and visits to Yukon Libraries** **July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

Stephen Abram's visit was well received by the Yukon library and information community. As Mr. Abram is a renowned international speaker in field of library and information science, his visit to the Yukon was especially appreciated.

Beyond enlightening us about the wide array of technologies available to us now and in the near future, Mr. Abram challenged Yukon librarians and information professionals to make full use of these technologies in order to improve our services to our users. And, though technology provides useful tools, he reminded us that the true value in libraries is not the collections of books/resources that we hold nor in the technologies utilized, the true value of libraries exists in the knowledge of library employees.

Mr. Abram also challenged Yukon library workers to communicate more with each other across departments, governments, and academia. He reminded us that while we work in many different settings, and for many different clients, we share the same core business ... the provision of relevant and accurate information and value-added information services to our users. The more we share our experiences and resources with each other, the better our services to our users will be.

In addition, EMR Communications Branch let CBC Radio in Whitehorse know that Mr. Abram would be in town and would be happy to be interviewed. CBC Radio was interested, and conducted a live interview with Mr. Abram on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Abram spoke about how millennials' (those born after approximately 1982) use of technology and information is very different from other age-groups (such as baby-boomers). Technology isn't an addition to their lives, it is an integral part of their lives.

### **Presentation to Yukon Library Community (Westmark Whitehorse, morning of July 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

Attendance: 46 (senior managers, librarians, archivists, library technicians, library and archives employees, records managers, records officers, etc.)

#### Summary:

Stephen Abram's presentation was enlightening and thought provoking. Attendee feedback demonstrates that Mr. Abram's presentation encouraged Yukon library and information professionals to think about how changing technology is both providing us with new methods of connecting with our clients/users and challenging us as it is difficult to keep up with all the changes.

In addition, many of the attendees noted that the library/information community does not meet regularly and/or discuss these issues as a whole. As a direct result of this presentation, we have created a "Community of Practice" (Yukon Library Association) within facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), with the hope of improving our communications within the Yukon library/information provision community, both inside and outside Government of Yukon.

Attendees also commented that this presentation was limited to technological changes, and that future presentations on other topics would be very useful. It was also noted that Mr. Abram's pro-technology bias was quite intimidating to many participants. These observations are very valuable as they demonstrate both the need for future library/information service focused presentations in Yukon, and that attendees were engaged by Mr. Abram's presentation.

Participant feedback:

NOTE: only comments specifically related to Mr. Abram's presentation are included below.

"I thought Stephen was a dynamic speaker. His talk was inspiring and motivating and kind of rocked my world a bit. I have been sitting on the fence on trying some forms of the new technology he spoke about and after his talk I went out and tried some new things. ... It was great to have this caliber of speaker in Whitehorse."

"I found that Stephen provided me ... a lot to consider, and I especially enjoyed his message of positivity about the generation coming up, seeing as we often hear negative information about them. I also appreciated his approach to libraries, who have been rather stuck in as he calls it the "worry tank" instead of just trying things out. He urged us to TRY IT..."

"I enjoyed Stephen's presentation, he has tons of useful information & he discussed very useful library techniques."

"As a [non-librarian] type I enjoyed his take on libraries being more than just a space to house materials. ... I [had] lost track of the big picture and am now looking at ways to showcase what we have."

"The group session for libraries met – and exceeded – my expectations."

"Our library community in the Yukon is very small and spread out and exposure to new ideas from a vibrant, knowledgeable library professional was a real eye opener to what is going on in the rest of Canada in the library world."

"It's good to see someone carrying the librarian flag in the every-changing world of information and technology, continuing to present the world of the evolving information professional to those involved in the library world. ... This sort of discussion should be open to all – not just library employees – so that they may be kept aware of what is happening in the world of information management."

"I found Stephen Abram's presentation intense and full of information. ... The emphasis on the technological future of the library was both exciting and frightening ..."

"I really enjoyed Stephen's talk. I had no idea that every day use of technology was so advanced. He is a very effective speaker and his presentation was entertaining and informative."

"What I found very encouraging was the broad attendance from library staff. I don't think I've ever seen so many Yukon librarians in the same room at the same time!"

"Thanks ... for bringing Stephen up here and providing an opportunity to hear and interact with him on several occasions."

"Stephen Abram proved an excellent orator. ... While he is correct in the assertion the future belongs to the youth ... I feel his comments were dismissive and perhaps even a little condescending with respect to the contributions being made today by those other generations up to the point in the future when his targeted demographic logically become the leaders. That is not to say I would dismiss his theme as being irrelevant because of his involvement in an enterprise focused precisely on providing future products to the millenniums'. On the contrary, I believe Stephen Abram's message is of vital importance for the Yukon to hear as a society. Being a small population we hold the advantage of the ability to guide social

evolution across our entire spectrum far more quickly and cost effectively than jurisdictions to our south. Still, I would have preferred to have heard solutions as much as predictions.”

“Stephen Abram was an engaging and thought-provoking speaker. He challenged people in the information management field to look at new ways of delivering programs and to embrace new ways of learning.”

### **Visit to Whitehorse Public Library, afternoon of July 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

Attendance: Whitehorse Public Library staff

#### Summary:

Public libraries’ staff indicated that they found the informal afternoon meeting with Mr. Abram was useful and interesting. Some feedback indicated that that this session was not as well attended or received as the presentation to the Library community at large (maybe due to the unanticipated emergency occurrence at Whitehorse Public Library that day and the presentation being delayed). Library staff appreciated the chance to speak in more detail about Mr. Abram’s predictions for the future of public libraries, and how the changing ways that youth/millennials use technology will impact the library services public libraries provide. Public library staff also noted that Mr. Abram provided some constructive feedback about their library that they hope to act on. The feedback was related to library layout, marketing ideas, and ideas for moving forward and innovating.

#### Participant feedback:

“The informal session in the afternoon was beneficial as Stephen addressed some of the public library’s specific questions and concerns”

“On a personal growth level I found his presentation and subsequent conversation the source of inspiration to explore his assertions for the future in greater depth. At a professional level, I hope some of the people of influence in attendance that morning heard the opportunities to which he alluded rather than listening to the message ‘you are out of touch with what’s really happening.’”

“Thanks for a very thought provoking and enjoyable day. It was great to get out of our familiar space and talk libraries with others who have the same interests.”

## **Visit to Yukon College Library, morning of July 4th**

Attendance: College library staff, College instructors and staff, Yukon Archives staff

Summary: Yukon College Library opened up their session to the broad Yukon College community and to the Yukon Archives. This session sparked some intense discussions between participants, who each look at information from quite different perspectives. In addition, the discussion that arose around the use of Google as an information seeking tool was interesting and enlightening (re: Google's control and manipulation of search results).

### Participant feedback:

“The discussion was lively and he gave the instructors a new perspective on information ...”

“His session at Yukon College involved various faculty and staff members as well as participants from Yukon Archives. The discussion was informative and at times quite intense which made for some interesting interaction. Staff were engaged and the atmosphere was positive.”

“All in all a thoroughly enjoyable event, and it was great to be able to touch base with many librarians in Whitehorse.”

## **Visit to Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources Library, afternoon of July 4th.**

Attendance: EMR Library staff

Summary: The EMR Library used this time with Mr. Abram to discuss simple and effective methods we could use to increase the use and visibility of the EMR Library. As one of the EMR Library's key issues is that the EMR Library's extensive information resources and knowledgeable staff are under-utilized by both Government of Yukon employees and the public, we wanted to focus on practical methods we could use to reach these potential client/user groups. Mr. Abram led the discussion and made many insightful suggestions for the EMR Library to consider. His suggestions were actionable and his observations were astute and invaluable.

The resulting discussion engaged library staff and brought to light many simple changes we could make to reach our outreach goals. We have already implemented some of these changes. While the whole afternoon was invigorating and useful, the most valuable nugget of information that we walked away with was "meet your users and market your resources and services to them where they ARE."

### Participant feedback:

"I guess the word "practical" quite summed up his visit to me as he helped us to see real ways that we could make changes and that should bring positive results for the library."

"Meeting with Stephen Abram in our library was great because he had a fresh, unbiased view of the library, the services we provide, and our clients. We are often too close to it to see how things could be done better. He had some excellent suggestions about strategic marketing and making the library more visible."

"His talk to EMR Library group was also beneficial as it gave us specific ideas as to how to change and improve our library to better serve our patrons and attract new ones."

"The opportunity to receive input about our small library from such an internationally respected librarian was simply amazing. Mr. Abram is one of the busiest leaders in the library profession, yet he made the time to meet with us and offer his insights, suggestions, and observations. We have already begun making changes as a direct result of his visit."

"Perhaps the biggest thing I took from Stephen's talk was an attitude shift. Don't dwell on all the reasons things can't be done. Just start doing stuff and see how it works."