venue from which to distribute cards, waive fines, set up payment plans, give away new books, and let people try out new technologies, games, and music. Most importantly, LiLi provides a venue for responsive service that empowers people and proves that the library is a place that is comfortable and welcoming. As Miller shared responses from LiLi users that showed how the service had changed their relationship to the library and improved their access to the things that make life more enjoyable and inspiring, she also shared the inspiration and energy that librarians can take from providing such service. As Miller affirmed, “Sometimes I almost feel guilty and greedy because every day I get to see what the library means to people.”

For more information go to http://libraryliveandontour.com/

FrankenLibraries: The Latest Tech Trends (Session B13)
Speaker:  Stephen Abram, Principal, Lighthouse Partners, Dysart & Jones Associates

By Gayle Graham

Like the dinosaurs, we risk extinction if we fail to adapt to change. It is obvious that great technological evolution is causing shifts in library collections and services. Often less clear are the specific ways in which these ongoing changes will manifest in libraries, the initiatives library professionals should take in preparation for such changes, and the nature of the roles libraries will ultimately play within the technological revolution which we will face in the immediate future. Stephen Abram offers a complete and concise interpretation of the current state of libraries and how they must evolve to maintain prominence and leadership on the cusp of what he predicts will be the most profound change of our lifetime. Abram shows unwavering confidence that library professionals can greatly influence how the world will progress. We can be a powerful force in the knowledge economy if we are proactive and embrace the change. Are we ready?

In order to embrace and adapt to the change, it is crucial to understand where librarians fit. “Reference is dead!” Abram declares; “Google does it better.” He asserts that our strength lies elsewhere, in the deeper “how” and “why” questions, the types of questions that library professionals are skilled at developing. We are service professionals, not servants. We are educators, not supplements. We provide a unique and valuable experience with a human touch. This skill remains highly relevant, and opportunities for its application are plentiful and exciting in the electronic environment.

Abram reminds us that, although he maintains that reference is dead, the book is very much alive. The current generation reportedly reads four times more than the baby boomers, even though the book as we know it is changing. Imagine what form the book will take in five to ten years. We can realistically expect an increase in e-book multimedia features including video, adaptive technology, and weblinks. Are libraries prepared to support such a format shift? Can they accommodate every type of device? What about technology beyond books? How are libraries incorporating 3D printers, holographics, and gamification into their services? Simultaneously, we are experiencing shifts within user communities that are often unpredictable. For example, Abram reports a recent study indicating that the highest concentration of smartphone ownership is occurring within the poorest populations. Arguably, community awareness and needs assessment are more important than ever to ensure that appropriate resources and services may be offered to every population.

Abram stresses the importance of forming partnerships that add value to library service, emphasizing the gap that exists between libraries and schools, and the need for a partnership. In New York, initiatives are being taken to merge the catalogues of schools and public libraries for a more accessible and user-friendly experience. Abram asks us to consider the following: for what purpose do barriers exist between two institutions striving for a common goal? Is textbook format still necessary? Is there a better way to provide educational materials? Is your library prepared to become more involved in higher education and offer diplomas?

The technology revolution is providing intriguing opportunities for libraries. We can focus on building a user-friendly, seamless experience into our search tools and e-services. We can tailor our services to our users.
What if we put our nonfiction resources in the cloud? This would make it possible to pick and choose relevant content and deliver it to the user in custom-made e-book format. Highly detailed electronic user statistics can be easily generated to convey who your users are and where they are located. The answers may surprise you. Abram challenges the library community to contemplate, plan ahead, and innovate with regards to all areas of library services. Collections, programs, partnerships, community spaces, and funding models must all be re-evaluated. Will the status quo suffice in the library of the future?

Google profits from its users. Apple and Amazon censor books according to their values. Should we tolerate such practices? Libraries’ role of humanizing the information experience remains vital, but we must break down the barriers between libraries and users. We are better than Google and we must show it. “Patrons don’t just come to the library to write their essay,” Abram points out. “They want a better life.” The mission of libraries to provide a better quality of life is unchanging, and remains essential to the communities they serve.

How should we approach change? Be creative and playful. Let go of control and be open to recommendations. Implement pilot projects. Focus on what you CAN do; not what you can’t. Take risks. We cannot control change, but we can control our attitudes. Change can be stressful and scary. To that, Abram declares, “Get over it!”

The Great Debate (Session C17)

By Gwen Fisher

Brace yourselves! Librarians are no longer needed in libraries. Indeed it is true, according to the results of this year’s Great Debate. If you haven’t yet had the chance to attend one, the Great Debate is a yearly CLA event that is a playful opportunity for leaders in librarianship to come together and debate a controversial topic. Yet how, you may ask yourself, did a room full of librarians at a national library conference resolve that librarians are no longer needed in the library?

The players this year included Madeleine Lefebvre, our steely moderator, who ruled with an iron fist. The debaters on the pro side of the argument (that librarians are indeed no longer needed in the library) were Les Moor, Head of Technical Services at the University of Manitoba Libraries, and Emma Hill Kepron, Liaison Librarian at the University of Manitoba, Elizabeth Dafoe Library. Against—and protecting the future of librarians everywhere—were Kitty Pope, CEO of the Guelph Public library and Jeff Barber, Library Director of Regina Public Library.

The supporting side argued that librarians have gone astray, that we are presiding over a veritable book burning with the move to digitization. They asked, who needs librarians anyways? Technical staff is more important than the librarian. What we really need are programmers, teachers, urban designers, social workers, and anthropologists in our libraries!

The pro side launched back the argument that librarians in libraries are fundamental to democracy and collective memory. Librarians decipher and sift between what is credible and accurate, and what is not. Librarians support lifelong learning, build community, and move forward with strategic plans.

While there was much wit passed back and forth, perhaps the best quip of the afternoon was that given by Kepron, who stated that there is only one job for which you need to be a librarian in this country: The head of Library and Archives Canada. This final point might have been the one that sealed the deal and delivered the pro side to victory.

While sitting in a room full of librarians who sided with the resolution that librarians are no longer needed in the library may have been enough to give any young librarian heart failure, I indirectly learned a lot about librarianship. There is nothing quite like the roar of side-splitting laughter, and it occurred to me that if everyone could attend one of these debates we would certainly smash the stereotypes of the shushing librarian.