

Colorado Association of Special Libraries (CoASL)

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, February 8, 2012

2:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Julie Carmen, Leif Madsen, and Stephen Abram (presenter). April Amack, Carrie Andrew, CO, Dan Cordova, Gene Hainer, Regan Harper, Kris Johnson, Kathleen Jones, Suzanne K., Julie Klauss, Charlie Leckenby, Deborah McGinnis, Jenna Obee, Pamela, David Sander, Kate Skarbeck, Shelly Sommer, Stephen Sweeney, and the Westminster Public staff.

President Julie Carmen opened the meeting at 2 p.m., greeting those present.

Vice-President Leif Madsen briefly shared his State-wide special library/museum indexing project with the participants, but it was cut short due to technical difficulties. If you would like to help with the project, go to <http://mydsn.org/COKnowledge/>. If data is missing for special libraries or museums in your area, please send the information to Leif at lmadsen@mdsn.org. We need your help!

Our guest this month was Stephen Abram, MLS, Vice President of FSLA, works at Gale Cengage Learning and past president of SLA. He also runs one of library land's most popular blogs, Stephen's Lighthouse. Recently, he wrote a chapter for a textbook on reference and research, and was the basis for this presentation.

To start, he posits that the role of librarians is being challenged. Google and Bing answer very efficiently the "who, what, where and when" reference questions. In fact, it was calculated that it would take 30 years for all of the librarians in the world to answer the number of questions answered by Google in 30 minutes. When we come to the "why" and "how", librarians are greatly superior to search engines. With the latter categories, several differences rule:

- The reference interview is more involved
- It is transformational rather than transactional
- Expertise counts

A serious problem we encounter is that people think the success they encounter online with "who, what, where, and when" questions is transferred to "why" and "how" questions, which is an erroneous assumption. The commercial character of search engines brings bias and questionable quality into deeper queries than simple "who, what, where, and when" questions.

Recommendations made by Mr. Abram include:

- Strengthen your brand; reposition libraries and librarians and don't tie yourself to physical space & collections
- Network with users socially, utilizing social media
- Measure impact, don't just count numbers. This is what will help ensure the survival of libraries
- Know your users
- Take greater risks
- Engage

Lastly, he urges librarians to reimagine service; focus more on research, which is where we can truly make an impact on our communities.

Questions session: Mr. Abram made several interesting comments in this session.

- First, failure is a great opportunity to learn. Mistakes are when one fails again and again and never learns from the experience.
- Play with new ideas to get used to them before they reach the "tipping point"; this occurs once a certain percentage (20%) of the population buys into something and then it becomes wildly popular.

Here, Julie puts in a plug for the Conference of World Affairs, which takes place at CU Boulder every year. It is scheduled for April 9-13, 2012. The URL is <http://www.colorado.edu/cwa/>.

Lastly, Mr. Abram ends with the thought that our society has just become information-based, where until recently, we were finance-based. People with MLS degrees are poised for success, if we are open to possibilities and do not limit ourselves.

Julie asked for input from members as to whether a set time would be good for everyone, and if Wednesday afternoons would work. Please give your input by emailing her at Carmen.julie@gmail.com.

If you weren't able to make our AdobeConnect session, Stephen Abram was riveting to hear. Your time would be well spent to go to our page at the CAL website and listen to him speak. Not everything could be included in these minutes and it was a great message for the time.

Thank you for those who came this month; it was a wonderful turn-out and a great experience for everyone.