

Sunday 30th October

Opening Keynote

MOLLOY, Martin (MBE)

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Derbyshire, England

PUBLIC LIBRARIES: THE END OF THE BEGINNING OR THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

In this paper Martin Molloy will discuss the position of the public library service in a rapidly changing public realm in England and Wales.

He will discuss the successes and failures of leadership at national government level, within the top tier local authorities with responsibility for delivering library services, and in the non-governmental agencies which act as a bridge between the two.

Martin will then turn his attention to those who have direct responsibility for leading and managing services. How successful have they been in articulating and delivering a coherent vision, and have they been effective advocates for the services they lead?

The state of public finances and the government's vision for a radically different public realm, exemplified by the Big Society idea, have wide-ranging ramifications for public libraries. Martin will look at national and local responses to budget reductions and to the emerging debate around localism. What do these mean for the funding and governance of public libraries? What alternative forms of delivery are being considered and what opportunities and threats do they pose for a service which is still, despite many pressures, at the heart of local communities?

Recent years have seen a new era of library campaigning, with a number of vocal campaigners at the national strategic level and, more locally, individuals and groups stepping up to defend local facilities under threat. Martin will consider the increasingly significant role of the courts in defining the limits of acceptable change.

In conclusion, Martin will analyse how the public library sector arrived at its present position and what are the options for its future; the opportunities and threats presented by an unprecedented combination of circumstances.

Keynote 2

RAPHAEL, Molly

2011-12 President, American Library Association

LIBRARIES: ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING, ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE

Description: Libraries of all types must change rapidly in order to survive. As a result of the current economic conditions, we are witnessing even greater threats to our futures than we have ever experienced before. How can we position our libraries not just to survive but to thrive as we serve our diverse communities? What difficult choices will we have to make in the next few years to ensure that our value remains high for those we serve? Where and how can we find opportunities to move our libraries to a place where they are seen as both essential for learning and for life in the communities we serve?