

# City of Brights

## A vision to spark imagination, creativity, and community at libraries around the world

Todd J. Humble<sup>#</sup>

**Abstract:** Briefly compares society of 2014 to the Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, and Silk Road experiences. Inspiration for library leadership to build greater community connections and there by to contribute to economic development through trending library services. Successful marketing trends linked to an action plan for libraries.

**Keywords:** Library Leadership, Marketing, Community Building, Maker spaces, Inspiration, “888”, economic development, CLAY.

**A new Renaissance?** The period commonly called the Renaissance happened between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries bringing Europe from medieval to modern times. It was a time of rediscovery as many ideas were more than a thousand years old. Most people did not even realize the Renaissance was happening as it took hundreds of years to evolve and initially only benefited the elite of society. Are we in a new Renaissance period now?

What made leading figures of the Renaissance different than their predecessors was their knowledge of many fields of study. As people look at various statistics it appears we are in a similar time now as people change careers many times now in their lifetime ([1](#)).

**A new Industrial Revolution?** From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries much of Europe and eventually America and other countries went from self-sufficient agricultural based lives to mechanized and urban lifestyles. Again the elites of society saw more benefits than the commoners that suffered long work days, dangerous working conditions, and excessive pollution. Are we in the next great Industrial Revolution? Many equate 3D printing of goods and services to a new Industrial Revolution and they are correct to some extent. 3D printing of quality goods rather than trinkets is coming within the reach of masses at an astounding rate ([15](#) (two years ago), [16](#) (six months ago in a library)), but do you really want to eat 3D printed food from the combination of various processed goods? ([17](#)).

**A new Silk Road?** From approximately 200 B.C. to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century the silk trade route in Eurasia led to many discoveries of previously unshared resources and ideas. The Chinese and eventual Indian portions of the route contained the most prized resources by Persian, Roman, Armenian, Bactrain, Sogdian, and Arab traders. Is the Internet our modern Silk Road?

The Silk Road was the major contributor to the spread of the bubonic plague. The Black Death spread by Silk Road traders led to the estimated death of one third of the world's population in the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century.

I believe we are in a similar time of Black Death. Our youth and much of society is being heavily influenced about what to think, what to feel, and what to do by small devices they willingly carry with them at all times. Internet addiction, short attention span and poor self-esteem are just a few of the problems these devices are contributing to. As several studies have shown people are looking at their smartphones 150 times per day (2). Look deeper into what people are using their phones for and you will find one fourth is for sharing experiences and photos. As you know a major social network, and undoubtedly others, have used this addiction to their advantage to attempt to influence behaviors. Advertisers are guaranteed a better reception of their message when they are able to tailor their marketing to the interests of the individual based on the analytics they are gathering about your online interactions.

Seeking alternate routes to India and China led European explorers to the discovery of North and South America and the eventual demise of the Silk Road. How can libraries create alternate routes to information and connections within their communities?

“Find and read the most amazing stories” -- Make OPACs into social experiences. There are ideas like this around, but are any as polished and easy to use as Wanelo (3)? Grouped items linked to placing hold requests for the items or direct access to the eMaterial formats. Staff often make reading recommendation lists, why not the public in a Pinterest like experience.

“Find and experience the most amazing stories” – We must take our most expensive resources to where they will be better utilized. Why is there no app for SmartCars for eAudiobooks yet? As development for driverless cars continues what resources would you want to see available in them? Why is there no app for SmartTVs for eBooks to make these resources available as 130 cm (50 inch) Readers to address our aging populations?

### **What other means can be used to spread happiness in our communities?**

The MakerCities 2025 initiative (4) is something that libraries need to become involved in. Not just expanding creative activities into MakerSpace access options, but serving as community incubators for mentoring new

skills and friendships. Teaching robotics ([5](#)), Hour of code events ([6](#)), Build an App events ([7](#)), Holding Hackathons ([8](#)), Startup Weekends ([9](#)), Paper Circuits ([10](#)), or even Squishy Circuits ([11](#)). By creating interests in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) and offering access to 21<sup>st</sup> job skills we are helping to build a stronger socio-economic base for our cities. There are many generations living at this time and each has different skill sets, unique experiences, and wisdom to share. Allowing these generations to mix in creative spaces can pass on skills and knowledge no longer being taught in many education systems, improve the individual's self-esteem as they are contributing back to their community, and expand happiness with personal real world connections made in a safe public forum.

Carpe diem – Horrace's full phrase was "Carpe diem quam minimum credula postero" which translates to "Seize the day (opportunity), put very little trust in tomorrow (the future)". Be ready to respond in social media as Oreo's Super Bowl tweet took the United States and much of the world by storm ([12](#)). Follow the marketing genius of Weird Al Yankovic's recent 888 method (8 new releases in 8 days on 8 different social networks)([18](#)). Plan and execute an 888 for an important week in your community (8 quality programs addressing 8 different audiences in 8 days)([19](#)). Do not trust that libraries will always be valued.

Lucem Diffundo – In 1847 New Bedford, Massachusetts proudly displayed this seal meaning "I Diffuse Light". The light they spread was as the world's largest supplier of whale oil for lamps and grease for the gears of the Industrial Revolution. Libraries can and should be involved in providing access to 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, ideas, and tools that will shape all our futures.

Analytix -- Libraries must learn to use Big Data to analyze community members being served and those not utilizing our services. Although online social networks are important, real world social networks of personal interaction will leave stronger impressions than a few words of wisdom or humor tweeted to a limited audience. Libraries must learn to target marketing to their unique community members and take advantage of their diversity. The simple truth is that no one achieves greatness without learning from others. Analyze and celebrate our communities! In thinking about how libraries can become part of the solution consider Dr. Pepper Snapple Groups most recent efforts ([13](#)). Library events can be targeted to these same types of people trying to improve life from a looking down mentality to looking up and around.

YOLO – You Only Live Once. Variations of this phrase have been around for over a hundred years, but this most recent rendition has turned into an excuse to do unsafe things for the thrill of it. Offering safe, family

friendly YOLO events at the library can reach out to our thrill seeking youth and the communities we serve. Make the library a lead organizer and the starting point for a community wide event such as a Color Run 5K (14).

### **The world is our CLAY, what are you going to MAKE of it?**

Join the positive visionary team of library leaders throughout the world and like the 19<sup>th</sup> Century City of Light campaigns (adoption of electric street lighting); let us be known as the founding members of the world's many City of Brights: Increasing the knowledge and prosperity of our member communities.

#### #About the Author

Todd J. Humble, Library Services Supervisor  
North Richland Hills Library, Texas, USA

- (1) <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704206804575468162805877990>
- (2) <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2013/05/cellphone-users-check-phones-150xday-and-other-internet-fun-facts/>
- (3) <http://wanelo.com/onchmovement>
- (4) <http://makercities.net/>
- (5) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6oSXsvXZWY>
- (6) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC5FbmsH4fw>
- (7) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5tQ\\_nZeGKw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5tQ_nZeGKw)
- (8) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nk2zJ2GTkQ>
- (9) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KyX1JOvSqU>
- (10) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwKQ9ldq9FM>
- (11) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ3oEpUPsr4>
- (12) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw9RSXaTFhA>
- (13) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyyS6k5PpMo>
- (14) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EERSfHiqT8>
- (15) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoZ2BgPVtA0>
- (16) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY2PhGszuUc>
- (17) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WWHpWgaq7I>
- (18) <http://www.scottmonty.com/2014/07/weird-al-is-marketing-genius.html>
- (19) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VadngOGKIP0>