

Reading Partners activity profile:

What's Your Bright Idea? launch

Reading Partners is a consortium transforming the way publishers and libraries work together, creating successful and exciting events and activities for readers. It is led by The Reading Agency, the independent charity working to inspire more people to read more.

When publishers Headline began planning launch publicity for *What's Your Bright Idea?* by Paul Humphries and Tim Campbell, winner of the first series of BBC TV's *The Apprentice* and founder of the Bright Ideas Trust for young entrepreneurs, they once again called upon Reading Partners for input.

"We've done some fantastic teen events at Swindon and Crawley HeadSpace libraries recently which were brokered by Reading Partners," explains senior press officer Samantha Eades. "I do regular events in libraries, and Reading Partners are important middlemen in deciding where we take our authors".

Reading Partners used its communications networks with public library services to invite pitches for a launch event. Seven bids were received, with Reading Partners advising on a shortlist of two. The eventual winner was City Business Library.

"Reading Partners sent out the author offer in good time, enabling us to put in a pitch. We were also reassured by the feeling that if there were any areas of concern, we could contact The Reading Agency for advice, but this need never arose," explains assistant librarian Louise O'Shea.

City Business Library has been open to the public in the City of London's historic Guildhall building since February 2010. Financed by the City of London Corporation and charged with providing a first class service to the business community, the library was already running an impressive calendar of seminars, functions and talks geared towards attracting young entrepreneurs, business support organisations and people working in business, complete with ever-growing contacts databases to promote such events to. It also boasts an airy central space with capacity for 250 people, cleverly designed with easily foldable and roll-away tables, plus a central reception and lending desk which can be cleared to double up as a welcome/bar area. So although this was the library's first-ever book launch event, it had plenty to offer Hodder Headline as partner for an evening event on 6 October 2010.

Library and publisher shared the set-up work and invitation list, with Samantha Eades overseeing production of invitations and arrangements to sell books, and with librarian Goretti Considine's team helping organise refreshments and a PA system.

"We liaised regularly and the relationship worked smoothly," says Goretti. "Even before the event, it had put ideas in my head for other book events to do together, and other publishers to approach."

Audience expectations were exceeded when 90 people attended on the night, with all but three of the 60 available copies of *What's Your Bright Idea?* bought.

"I think libraries are key to book publicists launching new titles," says Headline's Samantha Eades. "They are central to engaging new readers with books; to helping build the reputations of growing authors and to allowing fans to meet brand name authors."

"It was particularly pleasing that many of the attendees had never been to City Business Library before," comments Goretti. "We achieved our aim of drawing new people into the library".

"The introduction and presentations worked well and gave a real sense of participation. Everyone was very welcoming, approachable and friendly and there was a feeling of energy and 'can do', mirroring the message of the book and its authors," adds attendee Katrin Andersson. "The low key, conversational approach and interaction was refreshing and genuine. It was a very good, welcoming and well organised event."

Author Tim Campbell, for whom this was a first-ever library-based event, also came away happy.

"City Business Library was a good venue and an excellent location for an event of this kind," he says. As founder of the Bright Ideas Trust, he would surely have been extra pleased that business owner and trainer Valerie Lothian, having received an invitation to the event, was able to refer on a young hair stylist in need of business support, whom she had overheard bemoaning her situation to her mother.

"They both seemed very excited, especially when I mentioned the young business owners that have been created as a result of Tim's efforts," explains Valerie. "This direct referral would not have happened if I hadn't heard about the event happening at the City Business Library. Please keep up the brilliant work!"

**Reading Partners involves the whole UK public library network and 22 major adult publishers. A children's version of the scheme was set up in May 2008 involving 12 children's publishers. The Publishers Association and the main children's library bodies. For more information, please contact Sandeep Mahal on 0871 223 2041 or sandeep.mahal@readingagency.org.uk
Reading Partners: www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/reading-partners/**

