

Read All About It! The Impact of Reading on Learning

SLG NATIONAL CONFERENCE 23rd – 24th April 2016

I was recently able to attend the CILIP School Libraries Group 'Read All About It' conference in Derbyshire, thanks to an award from the CILIPS Professional Development Fund. Having only worked in the school sector for 2 years and being a chartership candidate, I saw this conference as an excellent opportunity to immerse myself in professional issues and information relating to the school library sector. This would be my first attendance at any CILIP/ CILIPS conference, and what a full weekend of information, ideas and authors it would turn out to be.



Conference delegates

After an introduction by the Chair of the SLG Sue Sharper, CILIP Chief Executive Nick Poole opened the conference with a talk entitled *A Vision for CILIP*. Nick provided an overview of the recent *CILIP Strategic Plan 2016-20* key findings and developments from this. This proved most informative and gave me a clear view of the direction CILIP will be taking. A detailed talk followed, by Professor Maria Nikolajeva into the link between reading fiction and learning, especially the development of empathy and the importance of this on children's emotional and social development. This is an area worth reading up on as it provides information and arguments as to why reading is important across the curriculum.



Philip Ardagh

With cognitive criticism and mirror neurons now entering my vocabulary, author Sam Angus spoke about her latest novel 'Hummingbird House', which was followed by the very entertaining Philip Ardagh who took us on a journey round his favourite books from his childhood. His passion for these books was undeniable and was a reminder that if we are not inspired about our service and resources we can't expect our students to be.

Following a fantastic lunch I had the opportunity to explore the exhibitor's stands from publishers, books suppliers and software providers and found this really useful and enjoyable and ran out of time over the whole weekend to speak to them all. The conference continued at pace with a whirlwind of a talk from the fantastic Cressida Cowell, launching her latest novel and talking about her writing process and making her books enjoyable to read. Linking in with Prof. Nikolajeva, Cressida felt 'a book is a way of walking around in someone else's skin'.



David Didau followed looking at 'What If Everything You Knew About Education Was Wrong', highlighting problems that may stop children being able to enjoy reading, but also statistics showing that children who read regularly perform better in exams. Definitely food for thought and an area for further personal study. I opted for a seminar entitled 'Creating

Independent Learners' as my final session for the day run by Daryl Toerien, which looked at his current school libraries approach to information skills and the importance of working to a framework across the school. Listening to this I realised how little I know about the provision of information skills across my school and this is now a key area for improvement for me.

Before dinner the exhibitor's roadshow took place, involving all exhibitors having 4 minutes to sell their stall to the audience. Post dinner the 2015 Carnegie and Kate Greenaway winners Tanya Landman and William Grill spoke about the impact of the awards on her lives.



Day two of the conference began with a brief AGM and was followed by Elizabeth Jarman examining how having the right learning environment can enhance the learning experience, and provided lots of ideas and suggestions on how changes can be made and challenged us all to go back and re-examine our library spaces. Two Chicken Shed authors M. G. Griffin and Dan Smith were let out of the coop and interviewed about their latest titles and writing process, with Dan also offering his suggestion on what to do if you don't know where to take a story- 'If in doubt, blow something up!'.



Following this I attended a seminar on 'Output to Impact' and how to demonstrate value. Carolyn Rankin highlighted the need to measure impact and demonstrate the value of the school library service, providing useful ideas, guidelines and resources to assist in this task, and encouraged us all to publish our research so there is more evidence about. Google was the order of the day next with Karen Blackman providing whistle stop review of Google

and its latest developments, which certainly opened my eyes, and also gave areas to talk about with students and teachers when using Google.

The penultimate session I attended was run by the inspirational Elly Barnes looking at ways to create more LGBT and diversity environments in our schools, an area I am keen to develop in the library and the wider school.

I had been looking forward to the final talk looking at management's view of what they expect from a school library. I may have been conference weary by then but I felt that this session didn't live up to expectation, though the speaker was clear about libraries being at the heart of learning in schools, and the need to move with technology. There were some useful ideas from the talk and this is my key finding from the conference as a whole. While no one session will revolutionise by library, I was able to glean ideas, suggestions and guidelines that I can apply to my work at Buckie High School to develop and improve my library, including my own professional knowledge. Would I go again? Yes! And I would especially urge any chartership candidate to do so.

ⁱ Read more about the report via the CILIP website at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/about/projects-reviews/strategic-plan-2016-2020>