

# Building partnerships: good vibes in Dundee

When **Christine E. Strachan** went to the CILIPS conference in Dundee, courtesy of a sponsored place from Academic & Research Libraries Group Scotland, she heard inspiring messages about building partnerships and embracing change.

**AS an Aberdonian, I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that I have never been to Dundee before. It has always been that city with all the roundabouts you have to negotiate before arriving at a more desirable location, like Glasgow or Edinburgh. Now, it could be the glorious sunshine – which made an uncommon appearance in Scotland and lasted for two whole days – getting to my head, but I fell in love with Dundee and I would like to applaud CILIPS for the excellent conference venue, top-notch biscuit selection (Tunnocks), and the delightfully gory, post-conference walking tour, led by Dark Dundee, which enabled me to see the city in a new light.**

## How to build partnerships

This year's conference, which took place 4-5 June at Dundee Apex Hotel, centred on the theme "Collaborative Communities – connecting with our networks". It was encouraging, although at times overwhelming, to see just how much collaboration is taking place amongst Scottish libraries. As a librarian working in higher education, I often struggle to conceive of how I could instigate a meaningful partnership with a library outside of my institution, yet Jeanette Castle, Martina McChrystal and Richard Aird showed that it is possible, each giving examples of how their institutions have successfully connected with libraries in their communities.

They make it sound easy but as a relatively new professional, I would like to see more made of the challenges of extending partnerships outside of one's institution. How do you approach a potential



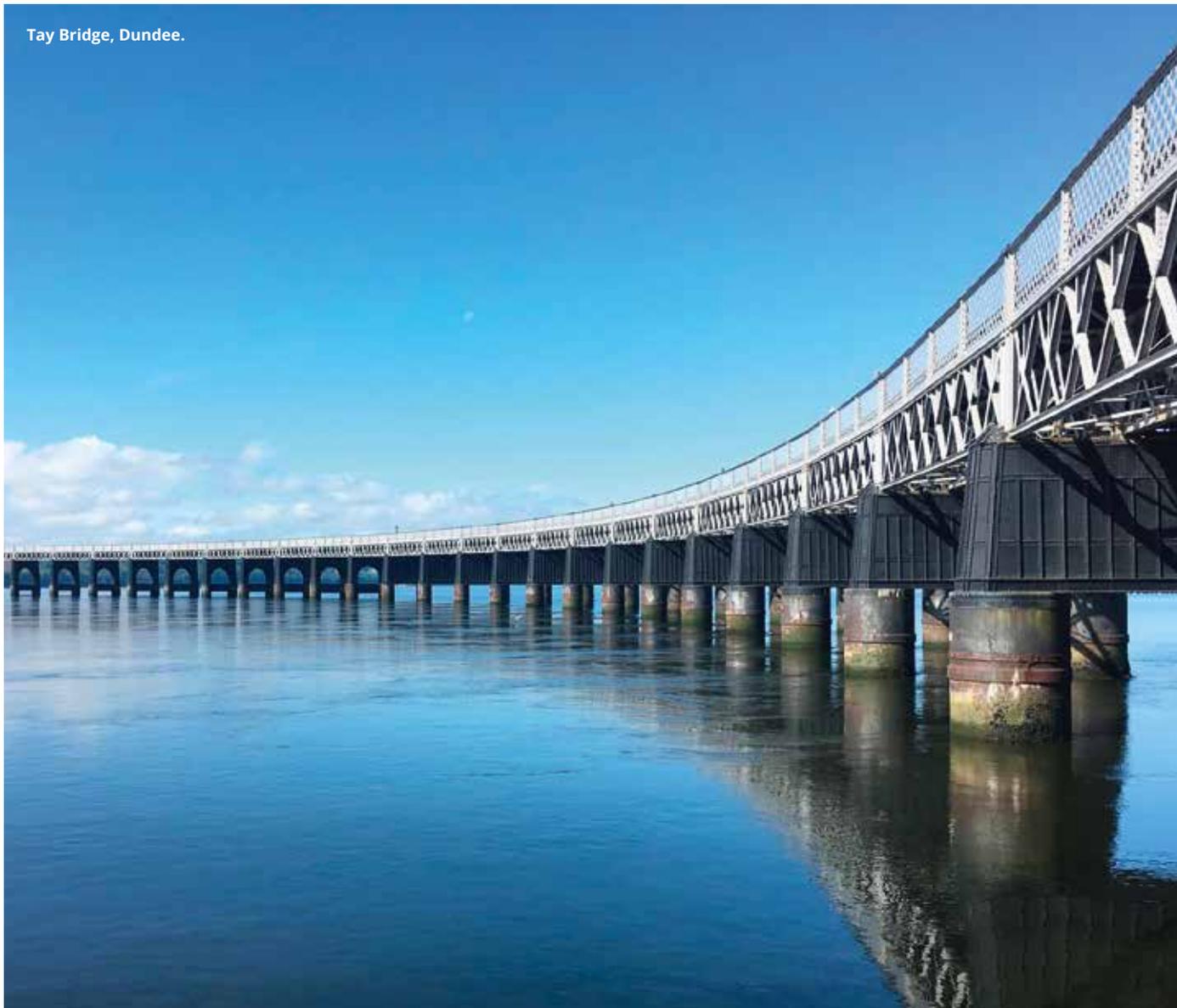
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partner with an idea? How do you balance the time and workload commitments with your daily routine? Whilst I realise that at a conference you want to shine a light on the successes and positives, addressing these issues would help make the idea of building partnerships seem more achievable to someone who has never done it before.

## Embracing change

Another theme that came across was how important it is for our profession to be responsive to change. Karen McFarlane emphasised this in her presentation "The Knowledge and Information Community". As organisations amass data, the skills and expertise of information professionals have never been more in demand, and yet we shy away from these roles. She challenged librarians

Tay Bridge, Dundee.



to “own this space” instead of undervaluing our capabilities. David McNeill also put change at the forefront in “The Role of Libraries in a Digital World”, discussing the shift towards the library as experience. He argued that librarians often see tech companies as their main rivals, when really we should be looking to Costa and Nando’s to understand why so many young people want to spend time there.

### Real impact on lives

The evolution of library space was something that Darren McGarvey also alluded to in his concluding keynote, albeit with a very different perspective. It was somewhat jarring to hear him mourn the loss of public libraries as a “quiet haven” after two days of listening to librarians champion the very opposite. But it was refreshing to hear his honest portrayal of how the library enabled him to educate himself

and escape poverty and deprivation. Well done to CILIPS for programming Darren’s talk at such a key moment in the conference – whilst not the rousing finale one expects from a closing keynote, it gave his message the impact it deserved.

### Good vibes

I cannot stress enough the warm, welcoming, all round good vibes that came across over my two days at the conference. However I believe that CILIPS could improve the experience even more, by increasing the diversity of their speakers and giving a platform to students and new/early career professionals who often have the most to learn from attending conferences. Perhaps organising breakout sessions aimed at new professionals, or actively encouraging submissions from those starting out in the profession, would offer fresh perspectives on issues that concern them.

I would like to thank the Academic & Research Libraries Group Scotland (ARLGS) for their very generous sponsoring of my place at the conference. **IP**

Dark Dundee tour.

