

CILIPS 2016 Conference – Making Connections. Day 1.

I was grateful to the CILIPS Professional Development Fund for funding to attend Day 1 of the CILIPS 2016 conference. As a new professional, currently working as a Business Information Officer for the Scottish Enterprise Research Service, I was interested in the conference's theme of 'Making Connections' as I begin the chartership process, to develop my knowledge of the wider profession and its current issues.

The first keynote speaker was Colin Cook, Head of Digital Public Services and Business Transformation in the Scottish Government. He discussed the government's aims for increasing digital participation, through investment in digital infrastructure, developing the digital economy and incorporating basic and advanced digital skills into lifelong education. Libraries have a key partnership role, as they not only provide individuals and communities with physical access to the internet but they can help in developing users' digital skills. Libraries can demonstrate value by ensuring that the structure and operation of services are aligned with and capable of delivering the government's aims.

Ian Clark spoke on radical librarianship in the first of the parallel sessions I attended. He explained the concept as re-connecting with our ethical principles, and challenging anything that undermines them, such as infringes on users' privacy and access to information.

The second parallel session I attended was delivered by Jean Rafferty, the convener of Scottish PEN's Writers at Risk committee. She shared stories of writers around the world who have been persecuted, imprisoned and murdered for expressing opinions, publishing the truth and even writing poems. She reminded us that freedom of expression cannot be taken for granted as free speech is not always without a cost. Jean considers librarians natural allies of PEN's work, given our profession's dedication to promoting human rights and advancing access to information and ideas.

After an update on this year's Tesco Bank Summer Reading Challenge, the second and final keynote of the day was from author and poet James Robertson, who gave an engaging talk on libraries, culture and power. One key message was that if knowledge is power, then reading is empowering, and that libraries are a place of discovery and empowerment.

The conference was valuable, both personally and professionally. In the lively and welcoming atmosphere, I caught up with old colleagues and friends and made new contacts too. The talks contained many ideas to reflect on and use as evidence within my chartership portfolio, in particular on the elements of demonstrating value and developing partnerships.

I would like to thank CILIPS for helping me to attend the conference, and for their hard work in organising and running a great event.