

CILIPS 2016 report – Caitlin McCulloch

Back in the beginning of June, I headed over to Dundee to attend the CILIPS 2016 conference. I wasn't alone – several Library and Information Studies students from Strathclyde were able to attend thanks to the [CILIPS Professional Development Fund](#), which covered the cost of the conference and a small accommodation budget.



Obligatory Strathclyde student selfie/conference photo.

Here's a quick run-down of the main talks I attended over the two days:

Day 1

Colin Cook, Scottish Government: Despite some jargon which I wasn't quite sold on ('national digital ecosystem'?), Colin's talk was a good one with which to kick off the conference. He discussed the Scottish Government's Digital Participation Charter, designed to give staff digital skills so that they can in turn help their users. Due to their position of trust within the community, libraries are in a good place to help with this.

Stewart Bain, Orkney Libraries: As an avid follower of Orkney Libraries on Twitter, this was the session I was most excited about. With 27,400 followers, their social media fanbase exceeds Orkney's entire population! Stewart charted its phenomenal rise and gave us some tips on how to make our own social media feeds interesting: don't be dull, use interesting items from your library collections and – if all else fails – cat pictures are a sure-fire winner.

Jean Rafferty, Scottish PEN: This session focused on writers at risk, and listed several worldwide cases in which writers campaigning for freedom of speech have been persecuted or punished. They bring an 'empty chair' to their presentations to represent writers who can't be there.



James Robertson, writer and publisher: James discussed culture and power in relation to libraries. It was really nice to hear from such a passionate supporter of libraries and the opportunities they bring; it came at a pivotal time, as austerity has really manifested itself within Scottish libraries in the past six months.

Day 2

After what must have been the quickest AGM ever, it was back to listening and live-tweeting! While the first day was more Scotland-specific, day 2 was more focused on UK and international initiatives.

Jan Holmquist, Guldborgsund Libraries – Jan's message from his session was that library initiatives should be globally inspired, but that this inspiration should be translated at a local level. Jan created 23mobilethings, a free programme designed to help staff gain digital skills (which fitted in nicely with the Digital Inclusion Charter), and he ran a crowdfunding campaign – #buyalib – which paid for five libraries in

India. He's also part of the Library Avengers, which is probably the best name for a library advocacy group ever.

Gary Green, Surrey Libraries – The crowdfunding theme continued in this talk, as Gary explained the Library A to Z – a set of illustrations which function as both advocacy and promotional material. It was designed as a fun alternative to dry, boring reports seeking to 'prove' libraries, and received £4500 through crowdfunding. I think this works because it's so accessible, and it's been used further afield than Gary had expected. All of the Library A to Z tools are available under Creative Commons [here](#).

Annabel Cavaroli, Midlothian Libraries/Laura Venning, the Reading Agency – This session discussed the results of various surveys on reading groups, including the most common makeup of book groups (middle-aged women) and the difficulties around starting up groups in places like secondary schools. The most surprising thing for me was that four libraries in Scotland charge users to attend book groups because they see it as a 'premium'(!) service.

Stuart Hamilton, IFLA Deputy Secretary General – I have to admit that I struggled to keep up with this talk. It might have been because it was the last talk, or because it was so high-level – Stuart discussed the role of libraries on the international stage and how libraries can help to meet the UN's [Millennium Development Goals](#) over the next 15 years. It was almost frustrating in that it suggested that libraries could achieve anything, but didn't focus on the realities surrounding them; however, IFLA does deal very much with the 'bigger picture'.

Of course, there were many interesting topics that I didn't get the chance to hear about, including talks on radical librarianship and accessibility. Luckily, all of the slides from the conference are available [here](#), and you can find tweets from the conference using the hashtag #CILIPS16.

General thoughts

The theme of the conference was 'Making Connections', and there were certainly lots of opportunities to talk to other attendees. The Apex Hotel was a great location and I couldn't write this post without mentioning the amazing food: I was expecting a couple of sandwiches, but we got three-course lunches! One thing I didn't take into account was how tiring conferences are. I didn't expect it given that the three main conference activities are listening, tweeting or eating, but I was exhausted by the end of it.

Overall, I felt that this conference was really beneficial, not just in all the facts we heard but just being in an environment with like-minded people. I'm now a school librarian and will hopefully be able to attend CILIPS 2017 in a professional capacity!