

CILIPS Conference 2016 – Making Connections

As a current MSc Student at the University of Strathclyde I was delighted to receive funding from the CILIPS Professional Development Fund in order to be able to attend this conference. The theme of Making Connections seemed appropriate for me as I finish my studies and attempt to launch myself into the world of professional librarianship. I was also particularly enthused by the variety of sessions available, many of which dealt with various uses of Social Media which I hoped would be useful for my dissertation “Social Media Use in Libraries, Archives and Museums in Scotland”. I was not disappointed!

The two-day conference was action-packed with inspiring and informative speakers. As there were six Strathclyde students in attendance we were fortunate to be able to enjoy the different parallel sessions and compare notes afterwards.

The Conference opened on Monday 6th June with a welcome from Theresa Breslin the CILIPS President and the first Keynote speech of the day from Colin Cook, Head of Digital Public Services and Business Transformation with The Scottish Government. He spoke about the importance of being part of the digital world and the role libraries have to play in assisting individuals and communities in increasing their digital participation and digital skills. He also addressed the need to be ambitious and not only aim for basic competence in digital skills but to aim for the population to engage in advanced digital activities.

After delicious coffee and pastries, I then learned some great Twitter Tips from Stewart Bain of the now infamous Orkney Library. His advice included the importance of giving social media a “human voice”, using humour and providing information that is useful to your followers. A real takeaway from this session was the ability of Twitter to facilitate connections all over the world and promote the library’s presence outside the local community.

Having enjoyed a hearty lunch, I then attended the Carnegie Library Lab session on Digital Toy Boxes. David Hayden, City of Edinburgh Libraries gave us an insight into his experience with this project and we also got to try out (play with!) the toy boxes. This session showcased an innovative way to engage teenagers and schoolchildren and encourage them to see their library as a vibrant and creative space.

The afternoon closed in a particularly inspiring vein – not only did we hear about the great work of the Tesco Bank Summer Reading Challenge but the day was rounded off with a keynote speech from James Robertson. “And the Land Lay Still” is one of my all-time favourite books so I was extremely excited about this speech and it did not

disappoint! James spoke about culture, libraries and power and how libraries are often described as places of refuge and exploration. His speech was peppered with readings from his book 365 and this definitely finished the day off on a high.

Tuesday 7th June had a lot to live up to! Jan Holmquist from Guldborgsund Libraries got us all connecting and reflecting on our learning. He also mentioned some very interesting projects such as Buy India a Library and the resources available through 23 Mobile Things. For me this speech really reinforced the importance of connection and to quote Jan “stealing other people’s good ideas”!

Amina Shah from The Scottish Book Trust then gave us an overview of the First Minister’s Reading challenge and this complemented what we had learned the previous day about the Summer Reading Challenge. I found it very heartening to hear about such importance still being placed on getting young people reading.

Maintaining my personal focus on Social Media I attended Ross McCulloch’s session on Thinking Strategically about Social Media. As this is something I will be focusing on in my dissertation, I found this a very constructive session and took away some pointers for my own research.

Another delicious lunch led us into the afternoon sessions. As I am newly qualified I chose to attend the Personal Learning Networks session in the afternoon. I found this very interesting and it was useful to learn about the resources available to facilitate building your own learning networks and also recording professional development. I certainly left this session with a list of CILIP and SLIC resources to look up.

As day two drew to a close myself and the other students were actually feeling quite sad. It had been such a whirlwind two days – in the best possible sense – and I think we were all disappointed for it to come to an end.

The conference was closed off by Stuart Hamilton, Deputy Secretary General, IFLA whose keynote was fascinating in putting the importance of library services and the access to information that they provide into a wider international context. A great way to finish off a conference about making connections.

All in all, I had a fantastic two days. I found the sessions personally very useful and the keynote speeches were really motivating. As a new professional I found it worthwhile to make my own connections and see my role within the wider context of the overall professional community. Thanks to CILIPS for the funding and I look forward to hopefully attending next year.