

CILIPS annual conference “Making Connections”, 5th and 6th of June 2016

Report by Melanie Tauscher

The first day of the annual CILIP Scotland conference started off with Colin Cook’s talk about libraries and connecting our digital world. With about 80 percent of the population having access to the Internet, Scotland has the highest level of basic digital skills in the UK. The Scottish government’s aim now is to move towards digital participation to provide a better quality of life, and what role libraries have to help achieving that goal. The digital participation charter builds on the relationships and trust libraries have within the community to launch digital community projects including the third sector. In areas with low digital participation, libraries provide access to skills and literacy training and information about privacy and copyright as a trusted institution. Colin Cook also talked about the importance to motivate and engage people with political and democratic issues. Social media and digital involvement can assist for better information and providing fast responses to inquiries to support public engagement.

Ian Clark’s talk about radical librarianship gave an introduction to the organisation’s aims and motivation. He stated that radical does not have to be violent, but that radical librarianship focuses on a theoretical approach to librarianship. To think about the ideals and ethical principles of our profession. The two main points of his talk highlighted access to information and capitalism with an introduction to the history of liberalism and neoliberalism to define the political context as well as distinguishing librarians from volunteers. 98 percent of public libraries are using filtering software systems which are also blocking content such as alternative lifestyles, from the LGTB community, sexual health information and more. By referring to information and library professional principles, one can challenge these settings, so Clark. “Defending our ethical principles makes us radical.” The radical librarianship group recognises the threat that the current economic system imposes on professionals’ values and principles and seeks to argue against it. “Be idealistic in your ideas and realistic in your goals.”

Ambition and Opportunity was the name of the presentation given by Pamela Tulloch and also the name of the first Scottish national strategy for public libraries in Scotland, launched in 2015 by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC). One of the funding provided by SLIC is the public library improvement fund that enables libraries to launch campaigns and innovative ideas and two funded projects were presented. First, North Ayrshire libraries created Appiness, a digital participation process that supports children’s digital learning using educational apps as part of their life-long learning skills. The aim was to reach parents and children who are not using the library, inform and train them to access educational apps through the library and being comfortable using digital devices such as tablets. Appitude, a follow-up project, is adaptable to primary school children and provides training for teaching staff and encourages to share their skills with the school. Falkirk trust community used Minecraft to foster digital inclusion, by creating digital versions of local landmarks in Bo’ness. This project supported children with their ICT and literacy skills, building on team work skills

as well as communication skills and boosting their self-confidence by celebrating the achievements.

James Robertson's inspirational keynote talk on culture and librarianship marked the end of the first day of the conference. Stating the public libraries that provide free access for all are the mark of a democratic and free society and that a public library without library professionals would be simply a place with books on shelves. The issues of measuring cultural value is underlined with an important argument that we run into danger of imposing values that are deemed to be good. But what does having access to a library mean to the individual? Johnson pointed out that books influence the perception of the world on an individual level and that books are empowering. And because libraries are the keeper of books are therefore forces to power and empowerment.

The second day started with keynote speaker Ian Holmquist who talked about making communities smarter through connections. How access to information fosters knowledge and lifelong learning, a highly valuable asset to a community and how society should challenge information that is kept behind pay walls in order to enable access to information for all. Technologies can provide structures to connect people to information in order to transform it into knowledge and furthermore create something new.

Ross McCulloch's talk about thinking strategically about social media provided helpful tips for libraries to improve their social media presence. Important points are knowing your audience well helps creating content that people want to engage with and link your social media content to institutional goals. To allocate staff member's time and set a budget provides a better structure to engage with users through social media and engage them to leave recommendations and comments about the services.

"Access and Information for all" presented case study examples and of usability testing of a government website and the vision statement of the Falkirk community trust vision for providing accessibility to services for people with disabilities. Both talks highlighted the importance of user-friendly websites and services to enable bigger community engagement.

The final keynote talk was held by Stuart Hamilton on IFLA's sustainable development goals and communicating the impact of libraries on an international level, promoting advocacy around the world, moving the focus to the bigger picture. Hamilton stated the importance of putting libraries forward as development partners and how providing access to information to the public will help to achieve set sustainable development goals.