

CILIPS Autumn Gathering October 20, 2016.

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Chartered Institute of Library
and Information Professionals
in Scotland

This year's CILIPS Autumn Gathering was held in Glasgow and I was delighted to receive funding from the CILIPS Professional Development Fund, which enabled me to attend. As a school librarian, I was especially enthused about participating in the school libraries strand.

The Autumn Gathering was opened and introduced by Theresa Breslin, CILIPS President, who told us that the day ahead would be full of inspiring sessions, with inspiring speakers. She went on to say that this would be a great opportunity to come together to share good practice and to discuss lots of new opportunities. This is particularly important for us in Scotland, where geography can make it difficult for us, as library professionals, to meet.

The first keynote speech was indeed an inspiring session, with an inspiring speaker: Diane Bruxvoort, University Librarian and Director, University of Aberdeen. She spoke about Library as Third Place and explained that, although she would speak in an academic context, there are lots of parallels with the school library. Diane told us that students need a satisfying place of work, a place at the heart of their community, a Third Place. This Third Place is their library. Diane stressed the importance of a low-stress environment and the need for students to make connections and the desire to interact with each other. We, as librarians, can make this happen for them. Diane told us there shouldn't be a wall of rules as they walk in the door. She made me want to re-examine my procedures and to tear down any rules that might be on display in my library. Further advice from Diane included: plan a loose, open structure; make the library unpretentious and playful and ensure a diverse population. The library should be for everyone in the community. What I learned from this session was that libraries should be a Home Away From Home and that we should constantly change our services and procedures to support our users.

Delicious refreshments were on offer mid-morning and whilst enjoying my tea, I took the opportunity to wander amongst the exhibition and chat to the exhibitors. I came away from the SCRAN table with an arrangement for a possible future in-service day in Moray, so all worthwhile.

For the first parallel session, I chose the **School Library Advocacy Group: an advocacy discussion.** This was particularly relevant to me, both as a school library practitioner and as a member of CILIP SLG Scotland Committee. Yvonne Manning, who led the session, stressed that we, as school librarians, should be looking outwards; we shouldn't just be talking to ourselves. The School Library

Advocacy Group aims to provide a forum for information sharing, networking and action. It also aims to promote and highlight the positive contribution school librarians make in supporting the curricular and developmental needs of young people. Yvonne told us that case studies will provide evidence of our work and asked for these to be put on to the National Improvement Hub www.education.gov.scot/improvement . This is a gateway to educational improvement resources and support. Yvonne talked us through HGIOS 4 and mapped how school librarians can impact on this. She said that we should be using the same document that teachers and senior leadership teams in schools use for quality improvement and I couldn't agree more. HGIOS 4 has clear sections which school librarians can impact on effectively and consequently, on education too. This session was stimulating and valuable and Yvonne concluded with a rousing rendition of the poem *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou.

The second parallel session I chose was **School Libraries – Engaging Reluctant readers – Ireland's JCSP Demonstration Library Project, led by Kathleen Moran.** I found this session to be personally very useful and was absolutely inspired by Kathleen Moran. She showed us the impact that professionally qualified librarians can have on disadvantaged pupils; those who are seen as challenging or who are under-achieving. Kathleen also talked about how school librarians are bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots and how we can make school relevant and accessible for young people who find school difficult. She told us that access to books and reading resources is one of the most significant indicators of success and that structured library programmes can have a huge impact. Her advice was that we should make the library exciting, avoid negativity at all costs and that it is more important to get the child back, not necessarily every book. I loved her "missing in action, presumed read" quote. Strategies Kathleen recommended included reading role models, postcards home and performance poetry, as well as access to cultural events. For so many young people, standardised tests are not important. For them, it is the things that cannot be measured so easily that are often so important. Hear hear.

A lovely lunch and an informative chat with the staff at the CILIP stand about PKSB, was followed by the third parallel session. I opted for **Scottish School Libraries and Citizenship, from Dr Lauren Smith, University of Strathclyde.** Dr Smith gave us an insight into her funded study into information literacy provision in the run-up to the Scottish Independence Referendum and General Election. This session looked at barriers school librarians face when providing information literacy relating to political events. Dr Smith also spoke about practice and policy in school and the presence of the school librarian as a knowledgeable individual whom pupils can look up to. There was some discussion amongst the participants about provision of information and how we can guide pupils through a maze of resources. All of which has challenged me to consider my own role in the provision of information and guidance for pupils in political issues. I also found it very worthwhile to learn about active research into Scottish school libraries.

After another refreshment break, (with delish sticky toffee cake) it was time for the last parallel session: **Information Literacy in Scotland- A Workshop from the Information Literacy Community of Practice.** This was a practical workshop and involved group discussion and sharing of ideas. Lots of good practice was shared and this is to be disseminated to all participants.

All were together in the main hall for the **final keynote – Libraries, Scottish Book Trust and key national agendas – Marc Lambert, CEO, Scottish Book Trust.** Marc was articulate, passionate and is

a great advocate for libraries, especially in Scotland. His love of books and stories resonated well with the audience and it was impressive to hear about the First Minister's Reading Challenge, as well as Book Bug, Authors Live and some of the other fantastic work being done by Scottish Book Trust.

The day concluded with **closing remarks from CILIPS President Theresa Breslin**, who reiterated what I felt, that we had enjoyed a truly inspiring day.

I found the CILIPS Autumn Gathering 2016 energising. I felt that it provided me with lots of ideas and strategies to take back to school and develop, as well as giving me insights into developments across the profession. This opportunity to meet with and chat to fellow professionals was superb and has shown me how vital it is to work with colleagues at a national level and to share information and skills. As a recently trained CILIP mentor, I want to use what I have learned from the Autumn Gathering to promote and encourage skills of any future CILIP Chartership mentees. Participation at this event has also ensured that I am refreshed professionally and has reminded me that I am in the best job in the world. I left the Autumn Gathering with this reinforced and feeling very grateful to CILIPS for enabling me to attend the Autumn Gathering.