

## CILIPS Professional Development Fund – Conference Report, Chris O’Malley



In mid June 2017, with the invaluable help of the CILIP Professional Development Fund, I found myself both attending and presenting at an international librarians conference for the first time. The event was the joint ‘International Congress of Medical Librarianship’ as well as that for the ‘European Association for Health Information and Libraries’; thus the [ICML + EAHIL conference](#).



Dublin Castle



Trinity College

The event was held in the beautiful grounds and buildings of the Dublin Castle. For the most part (it would be overly optimistic to assume a ‘whole’ week without a ‘little’ rain in Ireland) the weather was all sorts of sun-soaked goodness.

The relevance of this in practice was that most of the break times of the week were spent with attendees sitting on the steps in the sun outside the conference centre, adding to the random networking opportunities that were multitude in the friendly, stimulating and collegiate environment that the organisers managed to confer on the conference. Coupled with the lovely location and official accommodation at Trinity College, the conditions for a warm, welcome week with lots of learning and sharing to be had were set.



In seeking to succinctly place a practical description on the conference, my mind keeps coming back to the word 'potential,' with its inherent double-edged nature. This is not to signify any negative elements, however, it was just the nature of the programme that there were so many interesting parallel sessions, talks and workshops, that my 'kid in a candy shop' nature rubbed up against the 'fear of missing out' factor. So much to see and do, which is testament to both the organisers as well as the benefits that I and so many got from learning and sharing within the week.

There were 6 major themes for the conference:

- Leadership and Values
- Integration
- Technology
- Education and Learning
- Consumer Health
- Research/ Evidence Based Librarianship

In preparation for the event I wondered how these themes would interact together. In practice they connected, overlapped and dovetailed in a range of ways I had not expected, all to the positive. There was inherent scope for learning about practical projects conducted in myriad far-flung parts of the world, as well as to see peers in the field talk of best practice, standards for practice and examining future directions for the field, both in theory and practice.

There were also a range of themes that came together across the week. Again, for succinctness:

- There were a great deal of excellent talks, but my favourite stand-out was from keynote speaker Mark Murphy, an Irish GP with great honesty and insight into differences between understanding the need for evidence practice in theory, and the actual practice of it. Also highlighted a range of empathic facets regarding the nature of evidence and how it is understood by different health practitioners. He felt that health librarians have inherent value in this landscape, however we have to promote this value constantly.
- The biggest stand out theme across the conference for myself was that of 'Embedded Librarianship.' It spread from the 'Integration' theme and strongly infiltrated across the themes to show itself to be one theme genuinely at the forefront of the minds of many in attendance.
- The surprise 'zeitgeist' theme for myself of the conference was that of 'Story.' I should say that my antennae were particularly sensitive to this theme, being as it was central to my own presentation. However, it came up time and time again – a truly satisfying feeling,

taking my mindset from thinking I was coming a little from left-field, to thinking that this was inherently important idea in a range of ways to a great many attendees.

- There were many ideas, projects, websites, etc. that I can hopefully integrate into our service at the [Highland Health Sciences Library](#) and the University of the Highlands and Islands. To pick one great one, however, we will examine the idea of official accreditation for our information literacy and other training our service conducts for both the university and in particular the health services sector, e.g. the NHS Highland. With elements such as Continuous Professional Development, Life Long Learning, and Revalidation being part of the health sector experience, this is but one example of an idea being brought back which will help our service fulfil its goals.



All of this was just the 'official' programme, not broaching the social calendar, the tours of libraries and archives, and of course, the dancing, of which there was a good deal, and to an impressively high standard, befitting the nature of the rest of the conference.

While a specialised theme of a conference, I would highly recommend it to any in the field.