

SLA 80th Conference – Lightbulb Moments: Powered by Librarians – Harrogate 2017.

This was my first SLA Conference and it has set the bar for any future library-related events extremely high.

The schedule was jam-packed, starting at lunchtime on the Friday and running until 1pm on the Sunday. The days began at 8am with breakfast sessions and ran right through until the evenings on both nights with formal dinners full of speeches, awards and competitions.

In amongst various talks, celebrations and debates on the Saturday were four optional workshops. The first I attended was called Teenage Mental Health: Powered by Books, with authors Sara



Teenage Mental Health Discussion

Barnard, Tamsin Winter, children's TV presenter and broadcaster Katie Thistleton and chair, author Nicola Morgan. This was a really topical and important conversation about raising issues of mental health through fiction and addressing them directly via non-fiction. The conversation quickly focused on the thorny issue of 'triggering' – whether a teenager, when reading about a particular condition or symptoms, will find them a trigger for their own mental health issues. It was discussed that TV and radio broadcasters have strict policies about what can and cannot be shown/discussed but that books do not, and therefore, should they? This was particularly relevant as during an earlier

debate that morning about controversial literature featured in the Carnegie shortlists, author Melvin Burgess has stated that 'books are a safe way to learn about the world'. This conversation seemed to suggest that that was no longer the case.

That afternoon I attended 'Calm & Collected', a workshop about managing behaviour in the library by Annike Dase. This was the session I had been really looking forward to, hoping for a 'this will solve all your problems!' fix that would transform my working day. However, Annike took us through a process of understanding the reasons behind poor or challenging behaviour and invited us to be more empathic and supportive. I was initially disappointed in this approach, but as the session went on and she asked us to look at our body language and communication and suggested ways to create more positive environments, it began to make sense.



Carnegie Winner Ruta Sepetys



Book Haul

The most valuable part of the whole weekend for me was meeting and beginning relationships with publishers. During the 'Publisher's Roadshow' on the Friday afternoon, when a series of publishers spoke for a couple of minutes each about their latest releases and upcoming publications, I was struck by how enthusiastic some of them were. This gave me an idea and I approached the Bloomsbury Publicity Manager, Emma Bradshaw and Charlie Sheppard, Andersen Press Ltd's Publishing Director and asked them if they would be interested in doing Skype sessions with us. Their enthusiasm, passion and excitement was infectious

and I felt would be a fantastic way to generate the same feelings in the pupils, especially if they felt they were getting something – brand new books – before everyone else. Both agreed and I'll get in touch with them after the summer.

I came home with over 30 books plus posters, bookmarks, postcards, bags, catalogues and badges too – an incredible haul that will literally transform the appearance my library. I was also lucky enough to walk away with a Chris Riddell satirical 'Brexit' sketch which I hope to auction off as a fundraiser for library resources.

This was an extremely beneficial and worthwhile conference, both for my professional development, networking and the library itself. I bumped into Nick Poole as I checked out of the hotel on Sunday morning and was glad to be able to thank him personally!



Chris Riddell Sketch