

CILIP Conference 2017, 5th-6th July, Manchester

I was delighted to be awarded the CILIPS Professional Development Fund to attend both days of the 2017 CILIP conference. This was my first conference and it was rewarding both personally and professionally, providing an enjoyable opportunity to learn about the work of librarians in different sectors.

The conference opened with a keynote speech by Librarian of Congress, Dr Carla Hayden, who spoke about our duty to provide a service and what a privileged and trusted position we are in. Dr Hayden also provided some background to the Library of Congress and her inspiring work to open up the Library's collections to the masses. I was particularly interested to hear about her projects involving young people, as this is the user group that I also work with. This lecture was undoubtedly the conference highlight for me and I wholeheartedly agree with Nick Poole's reference to Dr Hayden as a "superstar librarian".



I then went to a session with Emma Ali about retaining young volunteers after the Summer Reading Challenge. I currently work as a School Librarian and this year have been involved in recruiting pupil SRC volunteers so this was a timely workshop. Emma brought along one of her team and I was impressed at the enthusiasm and commitment shown by the young people. This session taught me that relinquishing some control and giving young people ownership of the library will encourage them to engage with it.

We were then treated to lunch, which also provided an opportunity to network and explore the exhibition.

The afternoon opened with a thought-provoking keynote lecture about the politics of uncertainty and the power of questions from Professor Luciano Floridi, University of Oxford.

The lecture also highlighted that the role of librarians is to ensure that people can freely and effectively ask questions, counterbalancing the power of those who hold the answers.

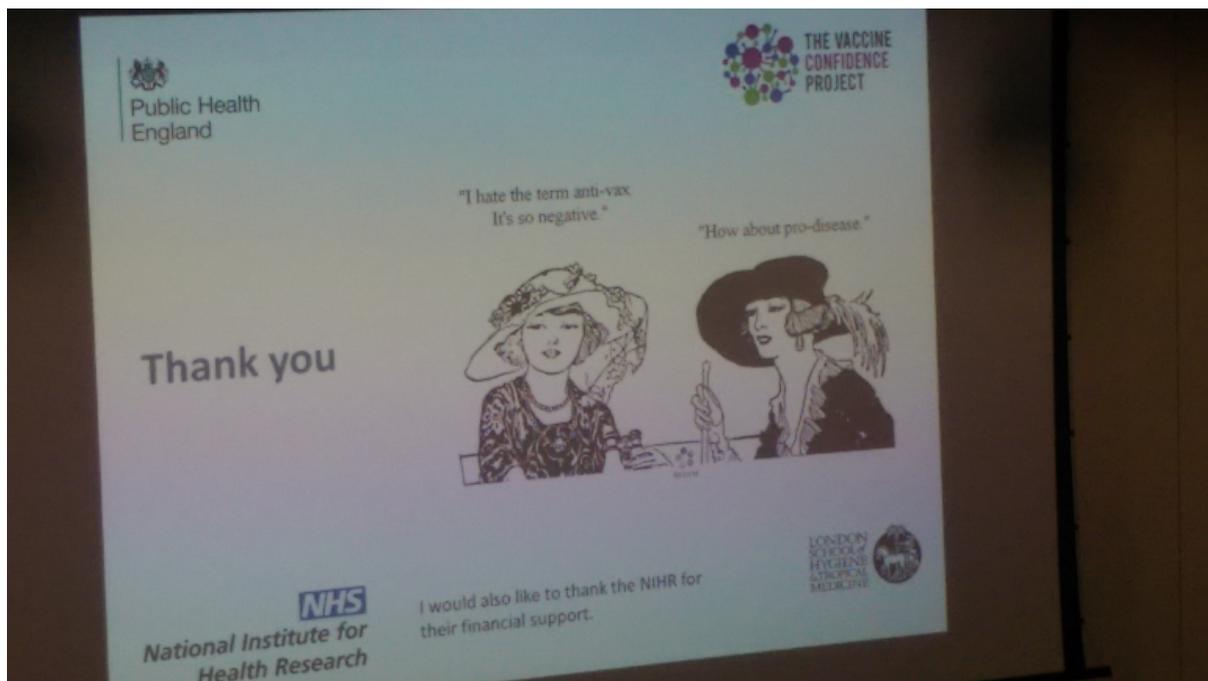
My last session on day 1 featured 3 talks around the theme of 'Designing Libraries'. Having written my MSc dissertation on the accessibility of Scottish public libraries I was particularly interested in Mark Freeman's lecture, 'Making Your Service Sight-Loss Friendly'. While informative, I was surprised and saddened to learn that a number of UK local authorities have not signed up to the 'Six Step Promise', which makes libraries accessible for those with sight loss and print disability. The essential point that came across from this session is that library users need to be listened to, looked after and clearly signposted to the services that they can benefit from.

In the evening was an opportunity for a tour around the beautiful Manchester Central Library. Day 1 ended with a drinks reception at the Museum of Science and Industry, which was another great opportunity for networking.

Day 2 started with keynote speaker Neil MacInnes who oversaw the refurbishment of a number of Manchester's libraries, including Central Library, to become places *of* and not just *for* the people. Neil reiterated that there has never been a greater need for free and practical information, and also discussed his work to make Manchester libraries' collections more accessible.

Next on my agenda was the 'Our Common Values Briefing', chaired by Martin Wayde, featuring discussion from David McMenemy, Stephen Wyber and Salil Tripathi. The briefing focused on our rights that are under threat and our need to debate and engage with each other, while also standing up to the pressures of governments to e.g. curb our rights to privacy.

After another lunch and networking session I attended the Information Literacy Seminar. This was very insightful and again featured three speakers. The first was Dr Konstantina Martzoukou whose work looked at the main barriers to newly arrived Syrians in the Aberdeen area and the need for language learning to take on community relevance. Next was Emma Coonan who discussed that university students are expected to arrive with information literacy skills but this is not always the case, and that they need to be taught how to learn. The last talk was a very interesting one from Dr Pauline Paterson which looked at the consequences of misinformation about vaccinations. This was a very thought-provoking session and presented information literacy issues in different contexts.



My last session was the 'Diversity and Equality' workshop by John Vincent. John discussed how work in this area should be embedded in rather than separate to the other work we do and that currently libraries don't focus on real diversity. This was a challenging workshop with heated discussion and provided much food for thought.

The conference has given me plenty to think about in terms of what I would like to achieve in my long-term career, and has provided practical advice and inspiration for project ideas in my current role. I met many wonderful, hard-working information professionals which was an absolute pleasure. I would like to thank CILIPS for providing the funding that allowed me to attend such an informative and engaging event.