Pure International Conference, 16-17 October 2019, Prague Congress Centre
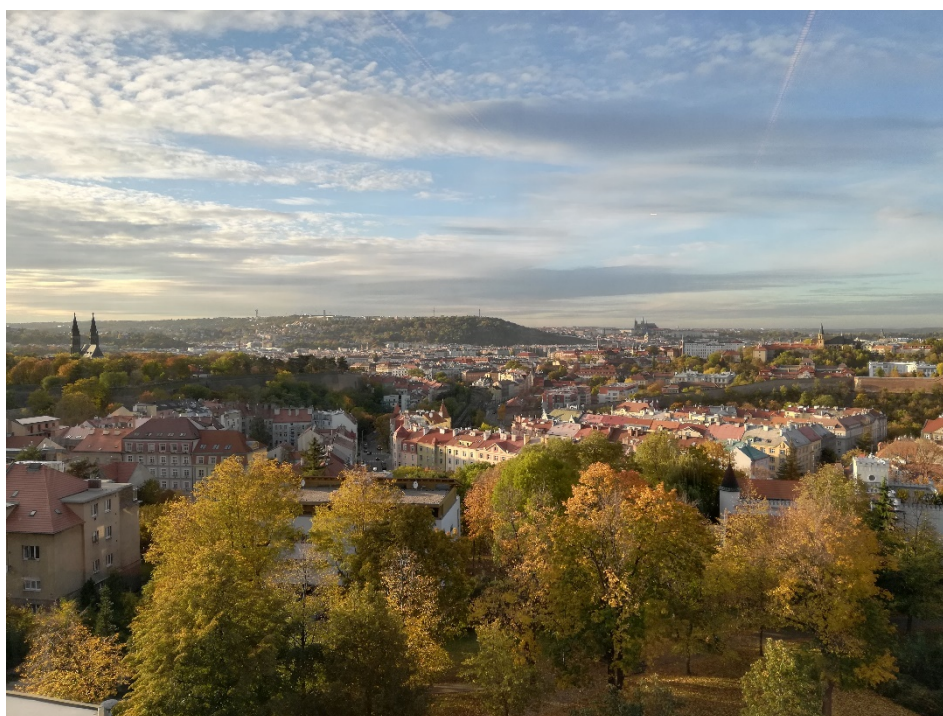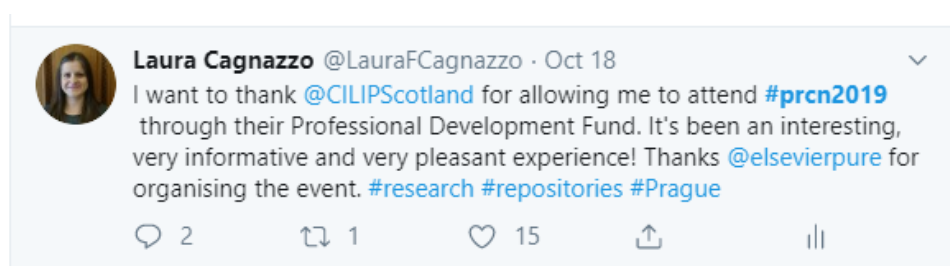

The stunning view from the Prague Congress Centre

I am so glad to have applied for the CILIPS Professional Development Fund and so grateful for having being granted it! The Pure International Conference is a key event for my role as Repository & Research Data Librarian at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), but unfortunately my workplace was unable to cover the expenses of my attendance. Therefore, the CILIPS Fund was providential!

For those of you who are not familiar with this tool, a brief introduction: Pure is a research information management system (owned by Elsevier) which is used at UWS and in many other institutions across the world to showcase their research and comply with funders' requirements of making research open access. Have a look at the Twitter hashtag #prcn2019 to have a feel of the event.

The Conference program included keynote speeches, parallel sessions, masterclasses, as well as social gatherings (the magician entertaining guests during the evening social was one of the highlights!). Something that I really enjoyed and that spark ideas and inspiration in me, was interacting with Pure users from all over the world, who use the system in the most different ways to support researchers at their institutions. I have attended meetings of the Pure UK user group and, understandably, the focus is currently on how to exploit this tool to better prepare the submission to

[REF](#) (Research Excellence Framework) due next year. However, REF is an evaluation exercise specific to the UK, thus it was very interesting to see how Pure is used in other countries, for different purposes and aims.

I have been working with this system for just over a year: it has been a steep learning curve and I still feel that I have only scratched the surface of its true potential. That is why such occasions are precious to improve my knowledge. I had the opportunity of asking many questions directly to the team who develops and maintains Pure, rather than having to send email after email to explain issues and doubts. At the same time, I had the chance to liaise with many users, from the UK and beyond, and that too helped my understanding of this resource and gave me inspiration on alternative uses of some of its features. The event allowed me to strengthen and expand my network: this is what you need to count on when searching for answers or solutions to problems, especially if colleagues at your workplace are unable to assist you.

One of the hot topics that recurred multiple times throughout the conference was research impact, more specifically, how to measure it. The REF2014 has triggered the first large impact assessment. Now that we are fast approaching REF2021, institutions are focusing on implementing and exploiting the right tools to prove the impact the work carried out by their researchers is having on the society, culture, economy, policies and so on. Some values are very hard to measure, particularly societal impact, since it goes beyond traditional metrics, such as citation data. It was fascinating to listen to the keynote speaker, Prof. Andrea Bonaccorsi from Universita' di Pisa in Italy, proposing a new methodology (based on textual analysis) to measure societal impact of research.

Other sessions demonstrated and stressed the strong need for institutions to strategically plan their research objectives: the traditional model of researchers doing their own work and then sharing it, is no longer sustainable. More public involvement is required in influencing the direction of research. The challenges we all face - global warming, climate change, food and energy supplies - should be playing a key role in shaping research efforts. On the other side, universities need to analyse their strengths and weaknesses, consider specific issues and topics where a gap has been identified and carefully plan their roadmap: this may enable them to anticipate the impact of their research.

The Pure staff presented the new system features that will be implemented over the next year. I may say something a bit controversial here, but I find the team behind Pure very approachable, helpful and receptive to feedback. I have heard many negative comments about the tool and I know myself that it is not the most user-friendly database. However, my experience at the conference and my day-to-day experience has shown me so far a commitment to improve the system and finding solutions to simplify the tasks of repositories' staff, that I struggle to find an equivalent of, within the information management resources' pool. Exciting new features were announced, such as: integration with more external databases, to enable further enrichment of the data stored on Pure; work around SEO (search engine optimization), to enhance the discoverability of information on researchers and their outputs and activities, thus strengthen their impact; improvement of workflows and tasks, to facilitate monitoring of data quality.

I truly enjoyed my time at the Pure International Conference. The beauty of the location was surely an added value! However, the confidence boost from feeling part of a community and increasing my knowledge of the system, really made my attendance worthwhile.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank once again CILIPS for supporting my participation to the Pure International Conference 2019.