

CILIPS regathering, October 2021



The day began with an abundance of tea, coffee and pastries – a sure way to a librarian’s heart – and a session on **Media and information literacy: our biggest challenge and greatest opportunity** by Dr Jane Secher. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of information literacy, and that it empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their goals. Previously information literacy was embedded in studying and research, but it is in fact intrinsic to all walks of life. A lack of information literacy is what has allowed mis and dis information to flourish during the pandemic. Without being critical of information you absorb someone else’s opinion rather than forming your own. It was heartening to learn that libraries and librarians appear in the government’s Online Media Strategy and its action plan, and that there was recognition that public libraries can address online harms.

This session segued into ‘Maddie is Online’ - addressing **Digital Literacy in Young People**. Children are exposed to a lot of information (and misinformation) online, and unwittingly give away a lot of personal information. Research shows that 80% of children lack the ability to judge an online source, and 20% face online harms. ‘Maddie is Online’ is a cartoon based resource for schools which aims to open up a dialogue with children.

The session **Climate action, inequalities and knowledge**, given by Lydia Ayame Hiralde and Sophie Robinson was interesting but not what I had anticipated. Lydia Ayame Hiralde said how “libraries are community spaces for climate action”. She spoke about what some libraries were doing to engage communities with nature, for example the British Library and its ‘Story Garden’ <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/skip-garden> and the Seed Library at *Mountain View Public Library*, California <https://www.mountainview.gov/depts/library/services/seedlibrary/default.asp>

Sophie Robinson emphasises that climate crisis is not gender neutral, and disproportionately impacts on women and girls (including transwomen), and highlighted the pale, male and stale nature of the politicians attending COP26. Sophie then discussed the work the Glasgow Women’s Library has done to create a space for fresh, collaborative feminist work on climate action. She ended her presentation with a list of very useful links for resources for tackling inequalities within Climate Change.

Scott Simpson, Lyndsey Ng and Margaret Fox’s presentation was **‘Virtual together: innovation in public libraries’** – and introduced the audience to using Virtual Reality in libraries, in order to

support health and wellbeing. It began as East Renfrewshire libraries buying VR headsets for the classroom. The kit they eventually bought involved using Google Expeditions to 'take' pupils to new and exciting places to learn', and led to asking 'how can we use VR in public libraries?' Their project identified people at risk of social isolation and loneliness, bringing them together in the library to take part in shared experiences. The unofficial title of the project is 'come and do your bucket list in your local library!' During the session they demonstrated how the VR kit can project onto a screen, and transported the audience to the Arctic via the Wander app on Oculus Quest, the iPad and the projector, and Lynsey demonstrated some of the games available.

Ania Matuszewska's session **Information professionals can wear many hats** was an employability workshop where she encouraged the audience to consider what skills and competencies they practice in their roles, and how to articulate them. She advocated using the CILIP PKSB in order to define the skills, and then use it to reach out beyond the library sector. She also had a list of websites where information and knowledge management jobs are advertised, several of which I had never heard of/

The session by Dr Laura Gormley, Elizabeth Carney and Chloe Elder **What does it mean to be a new professional** highlighted the research done exploring the challenges and opportunities facing new library and information professionals in Scotland. An audience member pointed out that the research done by the New Professionals network raised the same obstacles and challenges as ten years ago, and that here there is the sense that the more things change the more things stay the same. I felt encouraged to join the New Professionals Network as despite having been in my post for a few years I still feel very much at the start of my career journey.

Stephen Leitch's presentation **Sliding through lockdown** was about how he had supported his school during lockdown when teaching and learning went online only. He had used Google SlideShare, Symbaloo and Choice boards with carefully curated content to support specific topics. He had built a strong brand, and it had been well received by the school and the pupils. Stephen also spoke about the sensory story times he had run prior to the pandemic, where the library went into the special education department at Buckie High and directly engaged, through stories and props, with the pupils there. The conference audience got to enjoy the props as well, with Mr Oink (pictured above) and the homemade jellyfish stealing the show.

Dr Andrew Cox's session on **AI and the information profession** made me consider how Artificial Intelligence is everywhere in the library world, from closed captions to autocorrect to the search and recommendation features, to the sortie machine which deals with the book returns. Librarians and information professionals are well placed to see the challenges and continued need for critical information literacy. AI is an evolving idea, and the understanding of it changes as our idea of technology and intelligence also changes. AI and technology are not automatically an 'enemy' but can be adapted to complement the work of information professionals.

After day discussing the issues faced by communities, how challenges had been exacerbated by the pandemic, the dangers of dis and misinformation, a few detours into science fiction, and the work libraries do to address these things, everyone was able to leave with a smile on their faces. It was truly inspiring to see the work that other libraries were doing to keep doing the things libraries already do so well.