

CILIPS Professional Development Fund Report

CILIPS Annual Conference, 5th & 6th June 2023, Dundee Apex Hotel

Ellie Jack

I was delighted to be awarded funding from CILIPS which enabled me to attend this year's annual conference in Dundee. I'm currently studying for my MSc in Information and Library Studies at the University of Strathclyde, and I saw the conference as a brilliant opportunity to learn more about all aspects of libraries, listen to new perspectives, and network with new folks too. I hoped attending the conference would benefit my professional development and help me with my plans and goals for after I graduate.

It was a packed two days, with six keynote speakers and multiple parallel sessions, all on the theme of 'looking to the future'. It started with Sarah McGeown and Katherine Wilkinson explaining their Love to Read project, which aimed to engage primary school children in reading for pleasure.

There was a fascinating reflection on public libraries' work for communities during lockdown. Professor Peter Reid and Jeanette Castle explained the effects of loneliness and social isolation on our physical and mental health, and the role of libraries as community anchors.

Keynote speaker Sabir Zazai from the Scottish Refugee Council told us his personal story as an asylum seeker, which was incredibly impactful and called for kindness and compassion in the way we treat refugees.

A panel of past CILIPS presidents - Martina McChrystal, Cleo Jones and Amina Shah - discussed a variety of topics, including the role of women in the library sector, and the importance of advocacy, diverse leadership, and listening to the voices of communities.

The highlight for me was listening to how the team of volunteers at Glasgow Women's Library endeavours to be more sustainable. Gabrielle Macbeth gave a wonderful talk about how they have been refurbishing the building with carbon emissions as the focus, organising festivals, and greening outdoor spaces by involving the community in gardening projects. Sharing resources and connecting and learning with others are key aspects of their approach, allowing them to spread the green message. This knowledge will be extremely helpful as I work on my dissertation which looks at how libraries in Scotland can be more sustainable and contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to my interest in sustainability, my goal is to work in a public library, where I can engage with communities and help improve the equality of access to information resources. I thought it was interesting that the main themes that emerged over the two days were kindness, community, and the significance of physical spaces. I think this highlights the social benefit of library services and the fact that they are so much more than books and information - it's about the deep-rooted human value of connection.

I'm very grateful to CILIPS, both for organising such a well-organised, inspiring event and for the funding which allowed me to be there. I was able to develop my contextual awareness of our field, expand my understanding of how the library and information sector functions, and establish a deeper appreciation for librarians. I left the conference feeling truly inspired to continue my journey in libraries, and I'm sure the experience will be beneficial to my future career.