

Introduction

On the morning of 5th June 2023, I was excited to be heading to Dundee for the most 'back to normal' in-person CPD event I've attended since before the pandemic.

I was fortunate to have received a funded place to attend the CILIPS Annual Conference through the Professional Development Fund and the programme was packed with interesting talks to support learning and development. I enjoyed all sessions I attended, but will focus here on some which stood out as particularly relevant to me, based on my current role and stage of my career.

Keynotes

The opening keynote on day one from Dr Adele Patrick of Glasgow Women's Library was an excellent introduction to the conference, and the themes discussed came up frequently throughout the two days. Dr Patrick discussed feminist leadership and leading in a way which prioritises kindness, compassion and mutual respect, which nurtures staff, and which encourages shared vision and ownership over organisational aims. Similar themes ran through the #WINspiration talk on day two when we heard from Amina Shah, Cleo Jones, and Martina McChrystal, who each discussed their careers and their perspectives on leadership and current issues facing the sector. What struck me most about these talks, and many others also, was that while acknowledging current challenges, speakers highlighted the importance of optimism and of working together in new ways to effect positive change where needed.

The power of libraries as community spaces was prominent in a number of talks. Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council, gave a thought-provoking keynote on the experiences of refugees and the sanctuary he found in libraries on arriving in the UK. Sabir highlighted the importance of connection and of protecting spaces like libraries which are free to use and which facilitate this connection within communities. Similarly, Josh Sendall of the University of Leeds championed the role of libraries in providing opportunities for people to engage with new and different ways of thinking, suggesting they could be the 'antidote to the echo chamber'. Both of these talks reminded us of the essential role all libraries play in supporting communities, democracy, and access to information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a particular area of interest for many information professionals, including within the health sector where I work. As such, I was pleased to hear Professor Melissa Terras of the University of Edinburgh talk about AI and how it may benefit libraries in the future. Professor Terras spoke extremely well on this issue, looking at the history of AI in our profession, giving examples of how it may be used to improve workflows, and discussing how library and information professionals can contribute in this area.

Parallel Sessions

It was hard to choose which parallel sessions to attend, but I took away a lot of useful and practical information from those I went to, which included the three outlined below.

- **Relax and Renew: a year in review**

This session from librarians Julie Smith and Kimberly Bryce on the Relax and Renew wellbeing space at the GCU Sir Alex Ferguson Library provided the opportunity for me to reflect on the wellbeing offer at my own library. It was incredibly helpful to hear how other librarians approach this, gaining insight into the events run and resources offered at GCU. I took many notes and am looking forward to applying some of the lessons learned to the wellbeing space at my own library, particularly around further developing our collection and marketing.

- **All Librarians are Teaching Librarians**

I thoroughly enjoyed this interactive session where we heard from SarahLouise McDonald, Academic Support Librarian at the University of Edinburgh, on teaching as a librarian (which we may all already be doing without realising!). Hearing about SarahLouise's experiences and perspectives on teaching prompted me to consider how I approach training in my own role, and the practical resources shared for developing our own teaching skills were much appreciated.

- **The Scottish Universities Press – Innovation in Open Access**

Open Access publishing and making research accessible is an area of personal interest, and of importance within the healthcare context. As such, the talk on the Scottish Universities Press by Publishing Officer Dominique Walker gave me much food for thought! I found it inspiring to hear about the work Higher and Further education libraries are doing to foster greater open access publishing within their communities and thought this was an excellent example of what can be achieved through collaborative working.

Final Thoughts

The conference was an invaluable opportunity to connect with and learn from colleagues from across Scotland and beyond so thank you to fellow delegates and speakers for sharing their time, expertise and resources.

Finally, huge thanks to all at team CILIPS for putting on a wonderful conference, and for enabling me to attend via the Professional Development Fund.