

CILIPS Annual Conference 2023 – Report

Dundee Apex Hotel - 5th and 6th June 2023

I was very lucky to be able to attend to this year CILIPS Annual Conference, thanks to the CILIPS Professional Development Fund.

Two days filled with stimulating talks, great food and lovely colleagues: simply fantastic! We had a chance to truly listen (usually unheard!) voices and reflect as professionals on what we have to do for our communities.

Dr Adele Patrick provoked us listing some of the most daunting threats and challenges we are facing in the post-Covid era.

“In such a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world where do we find ourselves?” A feminist approach; based on kindness, non-violence and ability to listen can be our way out of despair.

A good example can be Strathclyde University project based on the following core points:

1. Transformation through kindness as an organisational value
2. Not hierarchical structure
3. Horizontal way of taking decisions

We left the room with questions like:

- a. How do we want to re-create our values and ourselves?
- b. Do we need to re-arrange ourselves optimistically?
- c. How do we create a new leadership approach?

Dr McMenemy had us considering the deep link between our profession and values, with the word advocacy, which needs to be a collective task.

Looking at some of the library science theorists' ideas, Dr McMenemy defined himself a strong believer of neutrality, however based on empathy.

Two supposedly antithetical words, which in this context have at heart a true interest in trying to understand our patrons.

Although, neutrality isn't the best word to reflect this approach, still not having an alternative is even worse, and this should be part – and possibly a (new) start - of our advocacy journey.

Sabir Zazai's session was the bridge we needed to understand the perspective of a person seeking asylum, explaining us the positive impact that librarians can have.

When he felt unseen, the kindness and the compassion of his librarians were all he needed to feel he had dignity, again.

Libraries have been and are a key point to support the integration and inclusion of our diverse community members, particularly nowadays in time of “cuts”.

Another great opportunity to realise how important we are as librarians, was **Josh Sendall's** session.

We started by agreeing that the core of libraries lays on discovery, making them parks for the mind and the soul.

We retraced what has happened in the last few years, beginning from 2016. Where we have allowed the “primitive pal” to take over the “higher mind”.

In this climate of uncertainty, libraries have been the hubs for collaboration, staying true to their values; facilitating connection, championing freedom and community sense, and most importantly giving equitable access to resources.

SarahLouise McDonald suggested the language shift from the word “training” to “teaching sessions”, which made me realise that I am already a teaching librarian in my current position: an epiphany!

This session helped me to feel more confident in my day-to-day job, and also in the approach I take when I teach. An utterly stimulating session!

Lastly, the **#WInspiration** session with **Amina Shah**, **Cleo Jones**, and **Martina McChrystal** was the most inspiring session of the whole conference.

Kirsten MacQuarrie lead a wonderful panel that made me feel understood and less lonely. Particularly, when I realised I wasn't the only one who felt frustrated in having to justify the existence of our profession, which is about the connections we establish. Despite the 75% of the professionals are females, there isn't the same representation in the positions of power. This is one of the reasons why we need to change the systems, together.

These are only some of the sessions that have stuck with me the most, however the whole conference has re-charged my enthusiasm for libraries, fuelling me with new ideas and connections, that I am already put into my daily practice.

I can't thank CILIPS enough for giving me this great opportunity!