

I've been working in the library and information for 20 years or so now, the last 10 in public libraries and as a School Librarian. My current role is as Librarian for the North Area of North Lanarkshire with an authority wide thematic area centred on children and young people. It has been a tough couple of years in libraries and the opportunity to attend the CILIPS conference was a great chance to remind myself of the great work libraries do as well the impact they have on people's lives.

I hadn't planned to go to the conference this year but when I found out about the CILIPS West day bursary as a member of the local CILIPS West group I decided that it wouldn't hurt to apply. Being able to attend without worrying about the financial side was a huge selling point! The process was simple and it was only a few days after the closing date that I heard back that I was successful.

There were many reasons I wanted to go to the conference. I have been considering starting the process of chartership and one of the parallel sessions was on this very subject, so I was very keen to attend that one. I was also very interested in the session on scavenger hunts as I felt this could be an opportunity to inspire something similar in my own libraries. Hearing authors talk about their work is always a joy for a librarian, so I was really looking forward to the keynote from Eleanor Thom and Sara Sheridan. In more general terms I was just excited to be amongst my peers and make new contacts, as well as the chance to reconnect with old ones.

On the way home I reflected on a brilliant day. The theme of the conference was Information for All, but for me what it really showed was how our libraries provide a window to our past, hold a mirror to our present and open a door to our future. Sara and Eleanor showed us how libraries and archives allow them to create the stories of people whose lives have been hidden or untold. James LaRue provided a fascinating insight into libraries in the present as they face the challenges of cancel culture and censorship. Similarly, hearing about the (Un)seen (UN)heard project telling the stories of LGBTQ+ young people was incredibly moving. Finally, I thought of my own future, taking inspiration from all these amazing people working in the library and information sector as I begin working towards chartership and finally gaining professional registration after 20 or so years in the industry.

There is no doubt that attending the conference has helped me professionally - It has given me the metaphorical pep talk I needed to finally make that leap to sign up for chartership for a start. It's easy to get lost in the day to day workings of your job, but taking that time out to talk to and be inspired by others in the profession, it helps you realise that, actually, you are doing a good job yourself. In general, being a member of CILIPS gives you that confidence in knowing there are people out there who appreciate what you do and will support you as you progress through your career. The training opportunities are invaluable and being part of a professional support network with all the resources and opportunities that brings is hugely beneficial. I'm already saving up for next year.