

Two Perspectives on CILIP's New Professionals Day, 10th October 2014

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As a recent graduate I'm at the very start of my new career and admittedly a little daunted by the range of options and specialisms open to me - perhaps the perfect delegate for the CILIP New Professionals Day. I've recently started my first para-professional post in an academic library, I hoped the day would provide some insight into other sectors and help me to start planning the next steps in my career.

I attended a range of workshops that introduced me to the changing world of service development - starting off by considering the user experience through social anthropological methods in a workshop, "Hooked on a (UX) Feeling" by Georgina Cronin from the University of Cambridge. This is an area of practice that was new to me and really interesting as it demonstrated how services are changing - and also changing the professional roles that they offer - in order to engage with users and provide services that will best suit their needs. By combining qualitative data that was gathered via ethnographic methods including user observation, with quantitative data that was gathered by perhaps more traditional methods such as the university survey, they are starting to see quite interesting results that are providing a better understanding of how their service is used and how it might be developed for both existing and potential users. Georgina signposted us to a range of useful resources to provide a better understanding of user experience and also gave us an overview of techniques that we might want to consider within our own workplaces. It was interesting that Georgina's employer views this area of such importance that they have a dedicated role, but for many of us, if we wish to pursue this type of research at present, we will need to integrate it within our day to day roles.

From this I went in to a workshop aimed at making myself the best candidate for a new position, "Get that job" by Suzanne Wheatley from Sue Hill Recruitment and Jayne Winch from TFPL. This workshop looked at a range of areas to get a new position and further your career - starting with searching for a job, recognising the importance of your personal digital brand, the development of your CV, preparing for interviews and interview etiquette, then also reflection if you are unsuccessful. It was a fast paced workshop but mainly because there was so much to cover and consider! It did make me consider all of the different facets that are part of making yourself employable and getting the job that you want, perhaps some that I hadn't really considered. Especially how there is still some benefit when you don't get a job, through reflecting on the feedback you receive from the organisation but also personal reflection on where you feel

that you struggled, where you did well and how you could use this to prepare for the next potential job.

Jan Parry, Vice President of CILIP, gave the keynote speech. Jan started by asking everyone in the room if they had a career plan and seemed quite shocked at the small number of hands that went in to the air. I must admit that my hands did stay by my side as at this early stage in my career the only plan had been to get a job, not where I might go from there. Jan then went on to share what her career plan had been and the interesting directions that her career had gone in - always linked to her plan but not always where she'd thought it would go. She stressed the importance of developing a career plan but to still be open to flexibility and diversity - as the role we want may not always have the words library or information in the title. Jan highlighted ways that we could get ourselves noticed within an organisation and also advised us to seize training opportunities to develop new and transferable skills. The main message that I took from Jan's presentation was the need to start developing a career plan - to challenge myself to think about where I want to be in five or ten years' time and then plan what I need to do to get there.

Moving into the afternoon I attended the professional registration workshop by Franko Kowalczyk from King's College London. Chartership is an important consideration for any new professional; some roles do list it as desirable or essential criteria within the person specification. Franko explained the [Future Skills](#) project and the changes this has made to the chartership process. He then took us through what needs to be included in the chartership portfolio and the types of evidence we need to include - looking again at the importance of reflection but this time within our day to day roles, training experiences, visits to other institutions and sectors. As someone considering chartership it was an interesting overview of what would be required and the opportunity to ask questions about the process.

The last workshop I attended focused on identifying what I can bring to a role that may be unique, perhaps as a result of interests or previous experience, "Make yourself a 'must have' and go places" by Emily Allbon from City University London. Emily shared her career to date - her role as law librarian at the UK Law School, the development of the Lawbore website for law students and the recent change to law lecturer. From this Emily has developed a number of top tips that include: gaining a good understanding of the whole business, working out where you can slot your skills to make an impact, thinking broadly about networks (as you may get benefit from non-library events or groups) and finding a "thing" that is yours (aka carving out a niche!) It was really interesting to hear about Emily's career path and to see how being a professional librarian may take you in directions you may not necessarily anticipate but that a lot of hard work is required.

At the end of the day the panel discussion also gave tips for career development - reinforcing some of the points that were discussed in the workshops and keynote speech. Advising us to be pushy and put ourselves out there, to be prepared to branch out and consider different areas, and also raising awareness of the importance of extra curricula activities - perhaps through joining our regional member network and special interest groups.

I got a huge amount out of attending the event. I learnt more about my new profession but I also came up with a long list of questions that I need to research, and also reflect upon, to help me take the next steps in my career. The event also made me quite excited about the future and hopefully the opportunities that I will find. As a result I'm very grateful to UKeIG for sponsoring my attendance and would like to thank members for their support of new professionals.

2) Jessica Haigh, Leeds City College

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The CILIP New Professionals Day is a chance for recently qualified librarians and information professionals to gain advice about getting into the profession, moving on in their career, learn about the route to Chartership or Certification and hear from others in the industry about their career path and what advice they have for getting that all important first professional post.

I am very grateful to UKeIG for giving me the opportunity to travel down to London and attend this conference.

Welcome to CILIP

The welcome address by Simon Edwards, Member Advisor at CILIP, was a passionate and uplifting way to start the day. He congratulated us on choosing the greatest career in the world, where change is the new normal, and recognition of our value as information professionals is growing. This may jar with the frequent reports of library closures, and lack of support for libraries in education, but Simon's plea for us not to undersell our ability to retrieve information did not fall on deaf ears. The audience of new professionals, a "cacophony of librarians" from across many sectors, was clearly as focussed on promoting themselves and the need for information professionals as CILIP was.

Simon's tips for getting on in the industry were as follows:

- Get Chartered
- Keep up to date
- Develop professional networks
- Get involved with CILIP member networks

Hooked on a (UX) feeling: research, users and academic libraries

"David Attenborough in a Cardy", Georgina Cronin is User Experience (UX) Librarian at Cambridge Judge Business School. Her talk was in part a plug for the [UX in Libraries conference](#) in March 2015. She spoke about how she got into UX, traditionally an IT term for studying the experience of people using applications that has now expanded into other sectors, including ethnography and anthropology, Georgina's areas of interest.

She spoke of how UX can be used by librarians to work *with* vendors and suppliers, in order to move forward and produce better products. UX research can also lead libraries to implement improvements in user services and develop staff training tailored to the real

needs of their teams. It allows libraries to identify user groups, including hidden users who may only use digital resources, and vulnerable users, who, through fear, peer pressure or accessibility needs may not be fully utilising library services.

UX research as done by Georgina uses ethnographic methods and results in qualitative data that can then back up quantitative data, such as the ever-popular annual survey. This research is presented as serious research projects, used to justify information and library services within organisations, and also to demonstrate the value of professional librarians, and librarians-as-researchers.

As part of the session, we did a cognitive mapping exercise Georgina has used to demonstrate what people find most valuable and important in library settings. We were given six minutes to draw our learning spaces, changing pen colours every two minutes. This very simple but effective exercise made me really think about how I see my workspace as a learning space, what parts of it are important to me and what maybe I see as superfluous. I can imagine this being a very effective way of measuring a user's wants and needs of a library service.

Georgina provided a long list of ideas and influences, including American librarian anthropologists and ethnographers Nancy Fried Foster and [Donna Lanclos](#), and the [UKAnthroLib blog](#).

This really was such a fantastic and inspiring workshop. I would highly advocate referring to the methods Georgina espoused. I certainly will be investigating how to implement this research into the libraries I work in.

Get That Job! Sue Hill Recruitment and TFPL

A straightforward presentation on tips for performing well in interviews, looking for work, and getting on in the industry, was my second workshop of the day. The presenters were from the now amalgamated Sue Hill and TFPL recruitment agencies, and were very positive about recruitment in the industry, which is apparently on the up! People are also becoming less afraid to change jobs and are using temporary contracts more to further their careers.

They gave us some really good tips about finding work, including the obvious registering with their agencies. Having a good "digital brand" was also emphasised, and certainly prompted me to update my slightly tired looking LinkedIn page! They also made the very good point that if you Tweet at ten in the morning, you aren't working, which prospective employers may pick up.

Interviews were also looked at in some depth, with tips including researching the organisation. Ask your agency consultants and professional networks for any information about the organisation or interview panel and re-read the job description and your application form, compiling a list of questions to ask them. There was also advice on interview etiquette and some practice in maintaining eye contact, which reduced myself and the other UKeiG-sponsored delegate to giggles over my ability not to blink!

This was a very functional presentation that really hammered home those important skills to getting that job, and I am now looking at ways I can improve my CV and get it out there.

Keynote Presentation - Jan Parry

Perhaps the strangest but most uplifting part of the day was the keynote speech given by CILIP Vice President Jan Parry. Jan has had a varied and mixed career, from becoming a qualified information professional in her thirties after working in the Jobcentre and Health and Safety Executive to providing information support to the Hillsborough Independent Panel.

Jan is an incredibly forthright and frank speaker. She started by telling us that we should never expect to be asked to progress, in fact this was the running theme of her presentation; it is our career, and we should be the ones to control it. There are many jobs, some without the words ‘librarian’ in the title, that could be considered a career pathway for an information professional, and we should be flexible and willing to do other things.

Jan also evoked the practice of ‘getting noticed’ in the workplace; giving bosses statistics and feedback from users and keeping evidence of everything done. Her other tips included:

- Don’t let managers make decisions about your career for you
- Beware the envy of your colleagues and do not put up with workplace bullying
- Get a good mentor-and don’t stick with bad ones, or ones that make you feel negative
- Don’t stay in the same place forever, and don’t presume you are safe

I have to admit leaving Jan’s presentation a little scared for my future, as career progression sounds a very daunting and time consuming task, with very little leeway for commitments outside of work that are not library-related, however Jan was very clear to say that everyone is different, and what works for one may not for others. My lasting impression was that one must have confidence in one’s career, and must fight for one’s right to progress.

Professional Registration

There was a workshop on the changes made to Certification and Chartership through CILIP that have recently come into place through the “Future Skills Project”. Professionals wanting to Charter may now start straight away, no more waiting a year after qualification. They must be a member of CILIP, and must have a mentor, and they can then start the process of starting their portfolios. This, again, was a rather practical workshop listing the things that formed part of a portfolio, and the best way to go about presenting them. Chartership seems like a positive way to prove experience within libraries aside from that in the employment section on your CV, and also expand your professional network.

Make yourself a ‘must have’ and go places

My last workshop of the day was with [Lawbore](#) founder, law librarian and very recently lecturer in law, Emily Allbon. She spoke about her experience and career within academia and gave some tips for career progression within an organisation:

- Gain an understanding of the whole business, what their “paying points” are, and how you can measure your impact within these
- Don’t limit yourself to “library stuff” (another big theme of the day, and made me realise that we’re no longer being encouraged to see ourselves as librarians but as “information professionals”)
- Develop new skills, new ways of connecting people with information and keep working on existing ones, such as teaching
- Communicate with “outsiders” in your organisation, think broadly about your networks and think about where you want to go within your organisation
- Carve out a niche. Find a “thing” that is yours, such as the website, or creating eLearning packages
- Raise your profile and push your work forward

Conclusions

In general, the whole day’s message seemed to be that, within library and information work, it isn’t what you do every day as part of your regular job role that gets you noticed. You have to work tirelessly on your CV, your professional networks, your digital profile, the extra curricula stuff that gets you noticed in your organisation (and then outside of it, through sharing what you do online). The hardest things are getting your foot in the door, learning to manage staff with very different career paths and expectations to yourself, and having to move sideways a lot to gain the experiences and skills needed to move up. However, as Simon Edwards said in his welcome address, this is the greatest profession in the world, can be incredibly rewarding and is growing in importance all the time. As the information society and economy grows in power, we as information professionals have a duty both to our wider industry and ourselves to make sure we are at the heart of it.