CILIP Conference in Liverpool
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Summary - *An overview of the 2015 CILIP conference in Liverpool. Covers keynote by R. David Lankes on 'an action plan for world domination through librarianship', a session by Phil Bradley on 'Developments in Internet search', Joseph O'Leary talking about 'fact checking the election' and Naomi Korn giving a master class on copyright compliance.*

It came as a surprise but I was very excited to be given the opportunity to attend the CILIP Conference thanks to UKeiG. The conference appealed to me because of its broad programme, and as a young professional I am still working out the aspects of librarianship that interest me the most.

I arrived in Liverpool on the morning of the first day of the conference, and was overwhelmed by the location directly opposite Lime Street station – St George's Hall – and the number of librarians milling around outside. We were greeted by a mini Superlambanana sculpture – a cross between a lamb and a banana, originally designed by Japanese artist Taro Cheizo. It had the benefit of generating conversation! From this grand entrance I located Lydia, the other bursary winner and John Wickenden, Honorary Secretary of UKeiG and our host for the event.

I chose the talks I wanted to attend by considering what interested me personally, and what applied in some way to my current job. These ended up being mostly talks under the theme of 'Digital Futures'. However the whole experience of attending this conference had the benefit of exposing me to issues outside of my sector, through meeting people who worked in health, public and prison libraries, to more unusual information professions that I would not have considered as being related to librarianship at all. In writing this I've decided to focus on the sessions which I feel have stuck in my head, however you can find out more about the full conference programme on the CILIP website.

The first session of the conference was a keynote by **R. David Lankes** (Professor and Dean's Scholar, New Librarianship at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies) - **An action plan for world domination through librarianship**. David kicked off by comparing the roles librarians have in different types of libraries, and how bridges can be built between them for us to learn from each other. It was highlighted how increasing confidence must be the action plan, leading us to participate in the community and appreciate how we add value to people's lives. We shouldn't be worrying about

competition from Google or Apple or Amazon. They are advertising companies, not information services.

David then went on to talk about the definitions of library and librarian. Librarians tend to be defined as the people who work in libraries, but maybe we should be considering it the other way around. It is not the books that are making a difference, it's the librarians, and we need to show ourselves, our expertise and our individuality. We don't know everything, but we do have the tools. This talk was particularly inspiring, and writing this after the conference it is still the one that stands out to me and I remember it made me feel very excited about what else was to come. His enthusiasm was infectious, emphasising the librarian's purpose, and highlighting how we can work to ensure our vital service is appreciated.

I spent the rest of the morning attending a talk on understanding digital futures as 'wicked problems' followed by another keynote, by Cory Doctorow, on free information.

That afternoon I attended a couple of talks and plenary sessions including squeezing (just!) into one by the immensely popular **Phil Bradley**, an independent internet consultant, talking about **Developments in Internet search**. The main aim of Phil's talk was to compare Google to the other Internet search engines out there. Phil discussed the downfalls of Google's business plan, including their search result links leading off the Google website rather than keeping the user on it. There are also many other websites that have much greater functionality and personalisation than Google. Also, their forays into social media have been limited, and in light of the success and popularity of Facebook and Twitter, this is an area that is growing more important in people's lives.

Phil then went on to speak about the complications that the 'right to be forgotten' has caused for search engines recently, and its apparent impossibility to be solved. Phil also gave us information about other search tools he uses to circumvent the Google's shortcomings, including DuckDuckGo ('the search engine that doesn't track you,') Yandex and IceRocket. These are all examples I have now tried out and it's interesting to compare them. I automatically go to Google every time I need anything, but there are alternatives that can yield more relevant results.

Phil concluded by giving us some suggestions of future developments in the search engine world, primarily what Google is doing to try and revolutionise its services. Some of the ideas were a little disconcerting, for example the installation of beacons in shops to alert customers to personalised offers and other relevant information when they approach them. Whilst the concept appeared intrusive to me, Phil did highlight that this kind of technology could be utilised by the information sector, pointing users to new acquisitions or services tailored to them. It will be interesting to see what becomes of this!

The first day ended with a **drinks reception** at the Museum of Liverpool, an opportunity to mingle with other delegates and enjoy the exhibits. Beforehand, along with Lydia, I explored the Liverpool Docks on what turned out to be a beautiful evening. Jan Parry, CILIP President, gave an emotional speech thanking everyone for attending the conference in her hometown. We left quite tired, but looking forward to the following day!

On Friday there were two fascinating keynote presentations by Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, and Erwin James, author and columnist at The Guardian. These illustrated what I enjoyed so much about this conference by introducing me to ideas that I

had no idea overlapped with librarianship. I also attended a talk by Ken Chad about service innovation.

The third keynote of the day, from **Joseph O'Leary** at Full Fact on **Fact checking the election** particularly interested me as the event was so recent and something that I did a lot of research for personally in order to inform my vote. He spoke of how rare it is to get the complete truth and how we should carefully consider everything politicians tell us. For example, the information the public were receiving relating to zero-hours contracts and food banks was miscommunicated by some politicians, along with issues relating to the NHS, which were a key factor for many voters. Since attending the conference I have visited the Full Fact website and found many articles clarifying facts stated in newspapers (such as GP waiting times and benefits), along with overviews of key issues (e.g. the scale of the challenge in the NHS, the deficit and housing issues). It is a vital and hugely interesting resource and their publication of relevant, topical articles could make a huge difference in cleaning up what news we receive. Some of their research has led journalists of well-read papers to retract their claims.

My final session of the day was with **Naomi Korn** – **a master class in copyright compliance, management and strategy for your organisation**. I selected this talk because in my current job I have recently been involved in devising guidelines and advising academics on what material they can place on the University of Cambridge Visual Learning Environment (VLE) Moodle. Whilst this talk was not an introduction it did open my eyes to the complexity and importance of copyright. Naomi highlighted that copyright is about ethics as much as the law, and the mutual respect between the creator of information and those using it. In the wider context she pressed that copyright is about risk management, including ensuring you have insurance and clear takedown policies. Therefore it is an issue for the entire institution or company you work in.

All this sounded a little daunting to me, especially when I'm just at the stage of trying to figure out exactly what copyright means to me and those I work with. However, Naomi concluded by outlining three reassuring steps to be taken by those in my situation:

- Breathe!
- Look forward, not at what has already been done
- Establish a long-term strategy – break the process down

After a closing speech by Jan Parry the conference was over and I was amazed at how quickly it had passed! As this was my first conference I think the main thing I have taken away is how many librarians and information professionals there are, even with the attendees obviously only being a small fraction of the entire community. I met so many interesting people, including Lydia and John. I thoroughly enjoyed their cheerful company over the two days at what was initially quite a daunting venture. It was also lovely to visit Liverpool, a city I had never visited before and plan to return to soon.

I would like to pass on my thanks to UKeiG for offering me the opportunity to attend the CILIP Conference 2015, and to John Wickenden for hosting Lydia and myself during the conference. It was such a learning experience for me, and has spurred me on to look into other events that can influence my professional development in the future.

Rachel (left) and Lydia at the 2015 CILIP conference