



# Internet Librarian International

London, 16 – 17th October 2018

For the second year running, I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Internet Librarian International conference in London over the course of two days. I particularly enjoy this conference because its theme, the internet and libraries, explores so many diverse areas of librarianship and information management. This year's conference was particularly engaging for me because its case studies looked at some exciting digital based areas of librarianship that I had limited awareness of and it showcased some of the cutting-edge technology-based skills that libraries are at the forefront of progressing.



Katherine Skinner (Educopia Institute) opened the conference with a keynote presentation entitled 'Cultivating knowledge communities'. She made the point that we often don't consider our professional groups and committees as micro communities that require the same attention, sustenance and investment in order to thrive as our personal ones do. This certainly encouraged me and other delegates to reflect a little more deeply on the talks we attended. As is usually the case with the ILI Conference, both days were broken into three separate themed tracks, giving each delegate some attendance options from which to choose. On the first day, these tracks were (A) Future focus (B) Understanding users, usage and UX and (C) Inclusion and inspiration. Certain talks stood out for me. Peter Webster spoke of the challenge of collecting and improving the discoverability of Canada's research data. Compared with my attendance last year, research data management had become an even more significant focus area, influencing many talks throughout. It strengthened my belief that librarians have a key role to play in imposing order and organisation on a research data landscape that remains quite scattered.

That afternoon, Marydee Ojala chaired an engaging panel discussion with Hal Kirkwood and Pam McKinney entitled "Skills for the next-gen librarian". I was particularly interested in the hearing Hal's perspective as he had recently transitioned from a role at Purdue University, where information literacy is regarded as a keep competency for students, to a position in the Business library of the University of Oxford, where he found students were more immediate and situational in terms of their information needs. For me, this was a lesson in the need to always be reflective and responsive in the support we provide to our library users.

Day two of the conference began with a keynote from Jisc 'futurist' Martin Hamilton. The concept of fake news and the undermining of traditional information sources featured heavily here with Martin arguing that librarians are uniquely placed to lead the campaign for the ethical use of information. A general theme emerged in day two of the necessity of embracing new methods to preserve and showcase research data for the digital scholar. Alex



Green (National Archives UK) spoke about using Blockchain to ensure that that the records of their digital archive were verifiable and authentic. I had never explored Blockchain in any depth but found the discussion of it and other software programmes to be indicative of the future orientated focus of research libraries. Developing meaningful and content rich digital libraries was the subject of some other talks that day and the end results were always impressive.

As usual, the Irish contingent were well represented at the conference. Maynooth University was represented by Hugh Murphy, Fiona Morley and myself. UCD Library by JP Kiernan and Josh Clark. UCC's Martin O'Connor also attended and gave his own presentation entitled 'Telling the story of a live

music venue – a librarian-led research project'. This involved introducing live music to public libraries. It was particularly heartening to hear about an initiative that academic and public libraries worked together to achieve.

ILI remains one of my favourite conferences to attend because, even with an awareness of the titles, you never really know what to expect from the such a diverse range of talks. I have yet to come away disappointed.

*Niall O'Brien is a Teaching and Learning Librarian at Maynooth University.*