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LILAC 2009 conference report

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The fifth annual Librarians Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) took place at Cardiff University from 30 March to 1 April 2009. Around 300 delegates gathered together to hear from four keynote speakers, and to attend a wide choice of parallel sessions covering this year's conference themes of:

- inquiry-based learning and information literacy
- emerging technologies
- information literacy for life
- supporting research.

Before the official start of the conference there was a choice of pre-conference workshops. Despite leaving home at 5.30 that morning I didn't manage to make the first workshop at 10.30 am. I did, however, thoroughly enjoy the 'Oh no – not another voting session!' workshop run by Emily Shields and Jayne Evans from Manchester Metropolitan University. This gave me lots of ideas for incorporating voting into my training sessions, with or without the sort of technology being demonstrated. The pre-conference workshops were followed by lunch, which built up much-needed energy levels for the programme ahead.

The conference officially began with a welcome and introduction from Dr David Grant, Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University. It was heartening to hear of recent investments into Cardiff libraries by both the university and the city council. I had hoped to pop into Cardiff's new central library (opened on 14 March 2009) but the conference programme ended up keeping me fully occupied. The welcome and introduction were followed by the first keynote speech of the conference. This was made by Melissa Highton, head of Learning Technologies Group at the University of Oxford, and was entitled 'Managing your flamingo'. One area that she spoke about was what she called

'open content literacy' and our role in supporting students, researchers and staff in finding, using and making open access learning materials. As part of this she showed us iTunes-u where the university has uploaded 150 hours of video and audio material of lectures.

The rest of the afternoon was spent attending a wide range of parallel sessions. I also had the opportunity to experience my first-ever Welsh cake – it certainly wasn't my last! After the sessions there was just time to check into the hotel before heading back out to catch the coach to the networking event at Caerphilly Castle, an extremely impressive venue, found approximately 7 miles north of Cardiff. There was plenty of food and some Welsh wine, which proved very popular. To celebrate LILAC's fifth year there was also a lilac-coloured iced cake.

The second day of the conference was another jam-packed day in which I attended six parallel sessions and heard two keynote speeches. There was also a bit of time to have a look at the poster exhibition. One parallel session I found particularly interesting was called 'The reality of information literacy: does Joe student actually understand what's going on?'. This was a video made by students at the University of Sheffield that explores students' understanding of the concept of information literacy. It was great to hear from students themselves and was extremely eye-opening. Although the students in the video demonstrated information literacy skills, very few of them had any idea what the term 'information literacy' meant.

The keynote speeches were made by Patricia Iannuzzi, Dean of University Libraries at the University of Nevada, and Leslie Burger, Director of Princeton Public Library. Patricia Iannuzzi spoke about the importance of engagement with students and understanding what motivates them. She pointed to how the gaming industry had developed its products to appeal to young people and how we could learn from them in our attempts to engage students. Leslie Burger highlighted the importance of libraries from all sectors in information literacy and the key role that public libraries can play in helping people to become digital citizens so that they can actively participate in today's society.

The second day was followed by the conference dinner, held at Cardiff Museum. This was another spectacular venue and a good opportunity for delegates to reflect on the variety of sessions they had

attended over the past couple of days. After the dinner the CSG IL (the Information Literacy Sub-Group of CILIP's Community Services Group) information literacy award for the most inventive initiative in the sphere of information literacy was awarded to Rónán O'Beirne for the PoP-i project. PoP-i was 'a collaborative, non-commercial venture between Imperial College London and the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council Library Service to develop an on-line learning programme for information literacy aimed at public libraries based on the instructional design principles created by ICL in their information literacy internal programme'.¹ The evening was rounded off by music and dancing.

The final day of the conference involved further parallel sessions followed by a keynote speech from Conor Galvin, lecturer and researcher at UCD Dublin. He talked a lot about technology and its use in education: it is important that we think about the way forward but we must not let technology enslave us. Just before the conference ended Janet Cottrell, Sarah Faye Cohen and Cinse Bonino were awarded 'best paper with an inquiry-based learning focus', sponsored by the Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences. They won the award for their workshop entitled 'Embedding information literacy: an exercise in inquiry'. Runners-up were Geoff Walton and Alison Pope for their paper on 'Research informed teaching, information literacy and the inquiry-based learning nexus'.

The last challenge of the day was to make it to Cardiff train station without getting caught up in the throng of football supporters who were preparing for the World Cup qualifier that evening. Once I had safely made it onto the train there was plenty of time to reflect on the last three days. The conference was very useful and has given me a number of ideas which I plan to investigate further with my colleagues. It was also extremely enjoyable and presented the perfect opportunity to network with other information professionals with similar interests. I have high expectations for LILAC 2010!

REFERENCE

- 1 Rónán O'Beirne, *Pop-i project website*, September 2006; see http://www.bradlibs.com/intranet/POPi_testOneRO/ProjectWelcomePage.htm (accessed 7 April 2009)