

## CILIP Conference Manchester 2017

This is my first ever CILIP Conference which is a bit embarrassing really as I first started working in a library was I was 17 and I am now...considerably older than that.

Manchester was looking particularly impressive in the sunshine and happily the conference coincided with the Manchester International Festival so there was an extra buzz about the place. I was looking forward to the opportunity to spend two full days of all things library and, as I work in a really small team, was hoping to come away refreshed and inspired.

The conference format was comprised of three key note speakers spread over the two days sandwiched between pick and mix workshops.

All three key note speakers were fantastic and gave an inspiring over sight into how literacy, with libraries as a conduit, enrich society and how we all share a responsibility as custodians of information for current and future generations. Themes which are huge and quite empowering and quite humbling, and ones, I admit, I don't often get to contemplate on a normal working day trooping through A&E on my way back from Costa.

First to speak was Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress. There has been much discussion on social media about Clara's speech but her warmth and humour were evident and she was a natural orator. It was lovely to hear about her job interview with Obama (how many people get to say that?) and how significant it must have felt as an African American herself. A consummate professional her speech never really strayed into the political but it would have nice to have gone to the pub with

her afterwards to find out what she really thought of Obama's successor.

After lunch Professor Luciano Floridi, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics of Information at Oxford University spoke. His talk was on the politics and ethics of information and the predominant theme was how big business controlled the access to the information. Like the really engaging physics teacher in school everything he said seemed really significant and interesting but you really hoped he wasn't going to ask you a question to check you had been listening properly.

On Thursday Neil MacInnes, Strategic Lead for libraries for Manchester City Council talked about the history and the multimillion transformation of Manchester Central Library. Working in a PFI hospital and knowing what a faff it is just to get a shelf put up the logistics of such a major project just makes me feel tired but he managed it and the central library is testament to his efforts and a fantastic achievement.

I attended 5 workshops. A personal favourite was one called *Poverty, place and low literacy* because of the themes of tackling social exclusion through literacy mainly because of the passion and enthusiasm of the speakers. Poor literacy impacts negatively on all aspects of life as evidenced in prison populations and reduced life expectancy. The other workshops I went to were excellent examples of partnership working between libraries and other organizations to make good stuff happen which was all very positive.

Now for the interesting bit...the food at lunch time was nice and the free bar at the evening event was even nicer but as I had to negotiate the tram system to get to my friend's house (and to stay fresh for the second day of course) I didn't overindulge.

I have been told that this year's conference (by those in the know) was particularly good but I would definitely go again and would encourage anyone who has never been before to give Brighton a try next year.



