Reflections on LILAC Conference 2018

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Before LILAC and expectations

I applied for the LILAC bursary from YOHHLNet as I was keen to learn more practical tips about incorporating information literacy (IL) into my counter work. On the counter we often give with ad-hoc training to customers on information seeking. Before LILAC I was vaguely familiar with the SCONUL seven pillars of IL and I hoped to learn more about what IL is at LILAC too. I wasn't sure what to expect from LILAC as I'd never been to a conference before, I was nervous that I didn't know anyone attending yet excited to be going on a career adventure!

LILAC attendees ready for Ola Pilerot's keynote

LILAC overview

LILAC18 was a three day conference from 4th to 6th April in Liverpool. I travelled to Liverpool early on the first

Catching an end of conference selfie with Michelle

morning and found myself in a room full of lovely helpful librarians at registration. Throughout the conference there was a welcoming atmosphere and it was lovely to meet so many people from different library sectors; everyone was open to talking to one another which quickly cast aside my fear of not knowing anyone. I signed up for the buddy programme at LILAC and was delighted to meet my buddy mentor Michelle though it, an academic librarian at Coventry University.

The conference was packed full of sessions and networking events. The three keynote speakers each had a different focus on IL but I enjoyed them all. On Wednesday Barbara Band questioned why IL isn't on the national curriculum in schools. Thursday saw Ola Pilerot talking through a lot of different IL models. David

White discussed digital IL with our growing online identities on the final day. The parallel sessions were mainly related to the Higher Education context, which reflected in the conference attendeeship. Attending these HE sessions however was a great way to learn about innovations in the academic libraries sector, as well as learning more about how HE libraries operate. I'm now acquainted with LibGuides, professional reading groups, bibliotherapy and IL training though play! It was enjoyable to learn about NHS IL innovations across the country too in NHS parallel sessions, such as how the NHS SWIMS region in the South West ran their recent HDAS training for library assistants as an online workshop via WebEx!

I came to LILAC18 hoping I'd understand IL better, and I did, but not in the way I'd imagined. In three days of LILAC the official CILIP definition of IL changed and I encountered innumerable other understandings of IL. I'm not so sure there's a set definition for IL anymore; as a socially constructed concept IL cannot be pinned down, and as a result our teaching methods for all things skills based should be flexible too. LILAC prompted my thinking about some other big topics in the library profession I'd previously not considered much before (see below). However I still managed to pick up some practical IL tips too!

LILAC networked with the Terracotta Warriors

- If you're doing training on using an all-in-one search function like EBSCO Discovery then first get people to search for an object on Amazon, such as for novelty pizza socks. When you then introduce your search engine your audience will make the link that discovery is a bit like internet shopping and will feel more confident in their abilities.
- Two talented NHS libraries collaborated to create a nationally available set of E-learning modules on literature searching. If a library customer needs training ASAP and there are no library staff around who feel confident in supporting them, this could be a suitable recommendation to them.
- Yammer is like an NHS friendly version of google docs. It can be used to work collaboratively across trusts on the same document.

The slides from LILAC18 are all available here: https://www.lilacconference.com/lilac-archive/lilac-2018-1 .

Reflections from LILAC

Tweeting at conferences
I tried live tweeting during the conference keynote speeches and discovered just how tricky it can be. I find it difficult to quickly articulate my ideas at the best of times but speed is of the essence on twitter! Live tweeting for the benefit of others not at the conference also means you need tweet a large quantity of information throughout a session.

Katie Smith @KatieSmithLIB · Apr 6

Using fingerprints to pay for lunch - my secondary pioneered this in 2009 I can't believe I've not realised how scary that is until now! #dataself #lilac18

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However, don't let these twitter challenges put you off! Twitter can open up new ways of networking at conferences. At times twitter introduced me to someone in the virtual world who I later when on to meet in person at the conference.

I was also recommended by another tweeter to change my twitter handle as at the time of LILAC my handle referred to my role rather than my name. I've since changed my handle to reflect my name – I hope this will make it easier for other tweeters to find and mention me on twitter.

I developed my understanding of publishing

I left LILAC more appreciative of research repositories and Open Access publishing, and I have since been encouraging our library users towards these routes in our trust's ACORN project. The lengthy but excellently named session named 'Using principles of evidence based practice, critical pedagogy and workplace information literacy to tackle wicked problems in the context of social services information support in Scotland' developed my understanding of the traditional publishing industry and the nuanced relationship libraries have to it. Traditional publishing, rather than Open Access and self-published material, can limit best practice in the field due to lack of access to research. The prioritisation of certain evidence, e.g. randomised controlled trials, can also limit sharing good practice as it sets the research bar so high, discouraging people from sharing case studies and even their disappointing but valuable practice failings.

I changed my idea of what research is and who should do it

LILAC encouraged me to see the importance of library staff participating in research themselves. We support research so often though helping those on the front line and yet don't consider ourselves as researchers - whether through lack of time, differences in professional priorities or a lack of confidence in our abilities. The hierarchy of evidence and traditional publishing models have created research as some lofty, huge force; at least it has done previously in my mind. I'm so lucky to be in a research supportive trust, my library colleagues put on a fantastic biannual research conference. I've been on the lookout since LILAC for potential case studies about my library which I can write up to share the research ethos. If you're interested in this I recommend looking at the LILAC slides from the action research parallel session 'Research for the terrified (and the tied up, the tired and the just plain turned-off)'.

I became more familiar with some vocational issues in the library profession

LILAC helped me identify some vocational issues in the library profession. Barbara Band discussed the de-professionalisation of librarians during her keynote, especially in the school libraries sector, which has led to school librarians being undervalued and unsuitably recruited. On the other hand, insisting librarians need a postgraduate qualification reinforces an overrepresentation of more privileged demographics in the library workforce, as these groups are more likely to be able to finance their studies. As a n able-bodied white woman with a supportive family and no dependents, I need to accept I've got quite a lot of privilege and fall into this issue! I would like to advocate for more accessible routes into librarianship but I'm yet unsure what forms these would take. Perhaps we need to look to the profession in other countries to try and learn how we can approach these issues.

My job is fun so IL should be too!

The session 'Play as transformative Information Literacy education' was very good fun! The session presenter used Play Theory to show us how to engage with others during IL teaching, which can break down barriers and encourage openness, and in turn better learning. He introduced himself by getting us to all move places and got us to play a giant game of pass the parcel with a cracker, which certainly made it a memorable last parallel session of the conference! The LILAC

My Superlambanana inspired by the Beatles 'Help!' album

conference team also planned some fun into the conference, with competitions for who could wear the most purple on the first day and to design a LILAC version of the iconic Liverpudlian Superlambanana. Our library has a lot of health promotion resources, which in themselves are good fun. The IL play session said people need permission to play from a facilitator to establish the right ethos, and I've since been trying to use the health promotion resources in a sillier way myself to encourage participation with them from others.

Tips for future LILAC/ conference attendees

- I'd highly recommend using a buddy scheme if your conference has one and you don't know many people going. I really enjoyed meeting my buddy mentor and it gave me confidence knowing there'd always be a friendly face at the evening events.
- I recommend having a little down time during the day. I missed a couple of sessions on the second day due to conference fatigue and in hindsight I have been happy with my decision. Conferences have very busy schedules and planning some down time will allow you to keep engaged in the sessions that you do attend.
- Ask your colleagues if there are any sessions they'd like you to attend on their behalf.
- Travel to the conference the day before and get accommodation close to the conference.
- For paraprofessionals/ aspiring librarians/ non-qualified at LILAC: be prepared for assumptions that you are qualified but feel open to asking others about their career paths.
- Bring something purple to wear on the first day if you're going to LILAC!