



Smashing Stereotypes: Librarians get loud: Academic and Special Libraries Section 2016 Annual Conference and Exhibition

Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Dublin: February 11 - 12, 2016

Together with parallel sessions and lightning sessions, there were nine poster presentations which were on display throughout. There were time slots when we could talk to the poster presenters and afterwards judge the poster we deemed best. Niamh O'Sullivan (Irish Blood Transfusion Service) won the competition. Her poster was full of colour, eye-catching, and just excellent. This was a great way to get talking on a one-to-one basis on a variety of LIS topics.

The first keynote speaker, Alison Macrina (Library Freedom Project), spoke about privacy and intellectual freedom in the age of mass surveillance. Alison had the audience at the edge of their seats as she spoke about the role she played in 'The Freedom Project'. She outlined how Edward Snowden influenced her in advocating for intellectual property.

National Library of Ireland Director Dr. Sandra Collins gave a thought-provoking keynote on "Learning while building a new strategy for the National Library of Ireland". She gave us a history of the National Library and statistical information on the institution. Sandra spoke about the value of a library discussion and also about the mission of libraries, which is to collect, preserve, and make accessible materials as they are memory institutions. We think this discussion resonated with many and reminded us that libraries also protect our history and culture.

The third keynote speaker was Jan Parry (former CILIP President and member of the Hillsborough Independent panel). She spoke on the essential role of the information professional in cases such as the Hillsborough tragedy.

In her talk 'Who's louder than a librarian from New York', Jane Burns (RCSI) discussed where opportunities for CPD could be found, which included other professions, on the job learning as well as personal interests and experiences. Her passion for the work she does was evident and it made us re-evaluate what we place an emphasis on in our CVs.

Parallel Sessions

- ‘Innovating our initiation: re-imagining a first year library orientation programme to closely align with the teaching and learning objectives’ was by Brigid Carey (Carlow IT). Brigid discussed how they placed a special emphasis on including students in the presentation aspect of the orientation which encouraged students to engage more with it. They also did a treasure hunt which helped students become familiar with the library in a fun way.
- ‘It’ll be alright on the night: DCU Library in Digital Humanities’ by Siobhán Dunne. Last year, DCU organised the DRHA (Digital Humanities & Research & Art) Conference. Siobhán discussed how they planned on making the conference a success. This included attracting big names. She also highlighted some of the challenges they faced, such as people coming in with different adaptors.
- ‘Raising Our Profile: 3 Approaches to be seen and heard’, by Laura Connaughton, Helen Fallon and Mary Delaney. They all addressed different aspects of promoting themselves. Laura spoke about making posters for conferences, Helen about writing articles and how to get published; and Mary on encouraging librarians to do PhDs. This workshop got a particularly positive reaction with many people from the audience asking excellent questions.
- Rudaí 23, was considered by Niamh O’Donovan, Stephanie Ronan and Caroline Rowan all mentioned the challenges they faced whilst conducting this course. As everyone on the committee lived in a different county, work was done remotely. They discussed the feedback that was received after the course, for example, that moderating it had helped improve completion rates and that having an active Facebook page had created a sense of community.

- ‘Make some noise with Social Media’ was given by Ronan Lynch (IT Carlow). One of the points that really hit home was the need for a commitment by the person or the team setting up Social Media for the library. Social media accounts are easy to set up but difficult to maintain. It is also important to decide on your content and tone and to be funny and creative with your posts and tweets.
- We had already heard from Alison Macrina the day before in the first Keynote talk where she urged us all to attend her parallel session, so I decided that I would like to find out more about safeguarding my digital privacy. The words I wrote to remind myself of what I thought at the time were ‘scary, confusing and mind boggling’. Many people are not concerned with their digital privacy and use the likes of Google because it is convenient and easy.

Lightening Talks

‘Shattering stereotypes – from shush to showcase’ This sketch was by Mary Dunne and Mairea Nelson. This was followed by Orla Nic Aodha and her talk on ‘The Spinster Librarian’ which dashed the stereotype of the role of women in 1916. The Heritage Council library intern Siobhan McGuinness shared the experiences she gained and the challenges she faced during her internship. The conference was rounded off by Elaine Bean (Maynooth University) who talked about her new role with the “Facilities and Events” team and urged everyone to take any opportunity that comes their way as you never know where it will lead you.

The conference made us think about us as librarians and to challenge the preconceived notions that ourselves and others impose on us.

Celine Campbell, St. Patrick’s College, Dublin City University and Saoirse Reynolds, Maynooth University were recipients of A& SL bursaries to attend the conference.

