

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 6 Issue 1

June 2012

Conference Corner

Elliott, T. 2012. Student to LILAC Superhero 2012. *Journal of information literacy*, 6(1), pp. 96-98.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/6.1.1704>

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

Student to LILAC Superhero

Thasya Elliott, Learning Resource Centre Assistant, Haringey Sixth Form Centre, and MA Information Management student at London Metropolitan University

Email: thasyaelliott@hotmail.com



Thasya Elliott (pictured at left) won the student award sponsored by the CILIP CSG Information Literacy Group to attend LILAC 2012 as a full delegate in April 2012. Thasya has written a short report on her experiences at this year's conference.

The area of Information Literacy (IL) is a relatively new concept to me, as is my experience in working in libraries. When the subject of IL was first introduced to me during a lecture, I felt a fire ignite within me and a deep ingrained interest in the subject began to develop – one I had not realised until that point existed. I decided in that lecture session that IL would be my main focus as I embarked on the journey towards becoming an information professional.

I was elated to have won the student award to attend the conference; however, I had no idea of what a conference like LILAC might contribute to my interest in IL, and both my personal and career development.

I must begin by saying to all those involved in organisation of LILAC, contributors and delegates that attended LILAC: thank you all so much for a wonderful experience. I was struck by the magnitude of the conference, which had a truly international flavour. This year's LILAC had 120 delegates from 23 countries, and I am pleased to report that I met with many people from different parts of the world. Listening to their library and IL journeys was so inspiring. The LILAC conference had feeling of unity, apparent as soon as I walked up to the registration desk on the first day.

The organisation of the events was seamless. White t-shirts with the LILAC logo, indicative of the LILAC Committee members, were always available to direct you to sessions or even to the lunch queue, to answer any questions or just to have a chat. I'm sure all delegates would agree that we were always well fed and well watered. The sponsors' slots were during the refreshment breaks, but they were in no way intrusive, which was appreciated.



**Thasya Elliott with Ruth Stebbings
(Loughborough University Library)**

I decided early on that I would get everything I could out of LILAC, so I booked myself on back-to-back sessions on all three days. My main interest lay in the programme theme of 'Transitions: From school through to HE', and I prioritised my attendance at these sessions. I have always wanted to work with young people and be a part of their development and progress into adulthood, so it was ideal winning the award and being able to attend sessions I had a huge interest in. I was pleasantly surprised that all the sessions were so relevant to my work, and LILAC further fuelled my interest in IL. The expertise of the presenters was apparent, the sessions were thorough and – for someone like me who felt wet behind the ears – there was relatively little jargon (and if there was it was clearly explained.) Issues were addressed with such precision that a newbie like me was made to feel comfortable and part of the IL community.

I want to highlight a few of the sessions that I particularly liked, including 'The Information Journey' paper (http://www.slideshare.net/infolit_group/coulbeck-hadfield-field) presented by Sarah Coulbeck, Emma Hadfield and Peter Field. I think the way the presenters addressed the topic area was very innovative and engaging. Instead of giving a snapshot of IL in an institution at one given time, they took us on Jeremy's IL journey from infant school to higher education, supporting the idea that IL education should start early and be an ongoing process. The presenters also highlighted how along the way there should be performance indicators in place to show the added value to students of IL skills.

Senga White, a school librarian from New Zealand, presented a very persuasive session entitled 'Preparing secondary students for tertiary study through embedded Information Literacy skills' (http://www.slideshare.net/infolit_group/white-12685155). This session supported 'The Information Journey' session, highlighting the point that students need opportunities to develop their IL skills. It was also suggested that a structured means of delivering information literature instruction should be adopted by an institution. In addition, Senga highlighted the importance of collaboration between faculty and library staff and between school and higher education institutions, a concept echoed by several other speakers at LILAC and one that I will be taking back to my institution.

I did attend sessions that were outside of my main area of interest to get a broad scope of how IL works in other sectors, which was useful and highlighted the cross-sectoral nature of IL work.

On day one, the keynote presentation – 'Playing the Ace: assessing, communication and expanding the institutional impact of information literacy' by Dr Megan Oakleaf from Syracuse University – was inspirational; her passion for the library profession oozed into the audience. Her presentation argued that librarians have an impact on student performance and that the library should be used as a marketing tool, reflecting how librarians help to achieve institutional goals. She spoke for an hour, and not once did she look at notes to aid her discussion. That is not to say that if presenters do refer to notes they are any less passionate about their profession, just that it was impressive to watch such a professional speaker. On day two we were fortunate to have Lord David Puttnam as



Tara Brabazon, Professor of Media and Communication and LILAC keynote speaker, with the LILAC team

a keynote speaker; he spoke about the importance of using technology appropriately to improve learning. On the final day Tara Brabazon, Professor of Media and Communication, gave an impressive keynote urging us to start a 'digital diet'.

The networking evening held on the first evening was the perfect opportunity to speak with people you had not encountered during the parallel sessions. There was a hot meal which was unexpected, and it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. I found that many people asked me for my card during the duration of the conference. For future students attending LILAC I would recommend taking a few business cards. I caught on a bit late, but we live and learn.

The dinner and award ceremony was held at the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow and was amazing. OK, so I am a little biased as I won the student award! On arrival at the dinner we were welcomed by a man dressed in traditional Scottish attire blowing on his bagpipes, which was a lovely treat. As you entered the venue the décor was amazing, and there was a champagne reception, which is a good start to any evening. As we were called to dinner, the sight before me was one I would never have imagined. It was breathtaking, with intimate lighting and well-dressed tables; the delegates were dressed to impress. Everyone was in good spirits, and there was a buzz in the air. The food did not disappoint either, and I was pleased to be seated with members of the LILAC Committee and with the winner of the Information Literacy Practitioner of the Year, Andrew Walsh from the University of Huddersfield – now there is something to aim for! I have never seen people so ready to have a good time as when the dance floor opened – a well-deserved treat to round off a mentally stimulating couple of days.

Attending LILAC has helped me to emerge and evolve into a better information professional, an improved student and a more insightful mother; after all, IL instruction should be started early on in a child's IL journey.



Thasya enjoys the LILAC conference

What I've taken away from the experience is a new found confidence in both my job role and in IL, faith in my profession, and a sense of belonging to a committed community. I have fresh eyes and innovative ideas, and I feel equipped to develop as a professional.

I would really like to thank the LILAC committee for being so supportive and providing me with all the information I needed to be comfortable at LILAC as well as all those who took time out to tell me their stories and to listen to mine, allowing me to get the most out of my experience at LILAC.

I left LILAC feeling like a Superhero of Information Literacy (invincible, equipped, protected and informed); my biggest challenge would be to ensure I could attend future LILAC conferences.