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## Conference corner

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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].

# Where the buses don't run: a LILAC 2015 conference report

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When I heard that I had been lucky enough to win a student award to attend LILAC 2015, I had no idea that it would feature [singing librarians](#), drawing information sources as sea creatures or networking with professionals under the gaze of a huge T-Rex replica - and that was only the first day. I soon discovered that LILAC is like no other conference and was quick to immerse myself fully in the experience.

Despite the title of this report, LILAC wasn't held in some remote setting – happily for us, the sun shone over Newcastle University throughout the three days. Rather, the title quote refers to ideas which emerged in two keynotes: threshold concepts, troublesome knowledge and transformative learning. Ray Land introduced these ideas on the first day, exploring the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, produced by the Association of College and Research Libraries (a division of the American Library Association), and how it has been influenced by threshold concepts (<https://campus.recap.ncl.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=fb2c8875-f382-4242-9e95-c4b5138fdc37>). Learning is not simply about achieving fixed outcomes; higher education should provide an experimental environment for learners to grapple with new, uncomfortable knowledge which can lead to an irreversible shift in their world view.

Barbara Fister's keynote (<http://barbarafister.com/LiminalLibrary.pdf>) expanded upon this thinking, stating that part of librarians' role in education is to encourage learners to change their relationship with information, to understand the social nature of sources and place their ideas within that context. She said that "it takes courage to go out 'where the buses don't run'" – helping learners embrace a state of liminality is a tall order. Critical IL empowers learners and gives them the freedom to deviate, enabling them to discover and create knowledge within and beyond formal education. Julia Jones' keynote (<https://campus.recap.ncl.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=fb2c8875-f382-4242-9e95-c4b5138fdc37>) focused on the importance of challenging received wisdom for trade union members; TUC Unionlearn has helped 30,000 representatives so far to encourage members to pursue learning opportunities. She argued that IL is essential for workers to both meet employers' requirements and to challenge the dominant, powerful narratives of management to ensure workers' rights. All three keynotes communicated powerful ideas about the role and nature of IL, inspiring much lively debate and lots of excited conversations.

When I wasn't having my worldview radically altered, I spent many break-times treating myself to the troublesome number of pastries provided in the beautiful setting of Kings Hall and talking to delegates from all over the world. LILAC volunteers had truly thought of everything when planning this conference. As well as Kings Hall's busy atmosphere, they provided a chill-out room for those who needed a quieter space to chat or reflect. For a first-time attendee at a large conference this space was very much appreciated, allowing me to find the right atmosphere to process a whole host of new ideas.

I had arrived at LILAC with a clear idea of which parallel sessions I wanted to attend but, upon revisiting the conference themes, I decided to take advantage of being among leaders in the field to find out more about areas less familiar to me. Carol Webb's (2015) talk about IL in schools ([http://www.slideshare.net/infoit\\_group/webb-46935522](http://www.slideshare.net/infoit_group/webb-46935522)) focused on the need

to build more communicative relationships between teachers and librarians and to acknowledge the subject- and individual-specific nature of IL. Learning transfer is nebulous and never straightforward. Jane Falconer's (2015) talk on using Moodle to deliver IL instruction to distance-learning medical students ([http://www.slideshare.net/infolit\\_group/moodle-in-mozambique-delivering-information-literacy-instruction-to-postgraduate-medical-students-at-a-distance-jane-falconer](http://www.slideshare.net/infolit_group/moodle-in-mozambique-delivering-information-literacy-instruction-to-postgraduate-medical-students-at-a-distance-jane-falconer)) made me view technology from a different perspective as much of the work done on the project focused on providing access to learning through responsive design. For students taking modules in countries like Mozambique, intermittent internet access or a reliance on 3G could make or break their potential to engage fully with their course.

My personal highlights were Barbara McCormack's presentation on the archival and special collections teaching programmes at Maynooth University, and Elizabeth Tilley's and Helen Murphy's talk on their use of storytelling to inform, plan and facilitate IL sessions at the English Faculty Library at the University of Cambridge ([http://www.slideshare.net/infolit\\_group/tilley-murphy](http://www.slideshare.net/infolit_group/tilley-murphy)). McCormack's account of teaching collection and research skills to undergraduate and postgraduate students through critical engagement with historic materials ([http://www.slideshare.net/infolit\\_group/mc-cormack](http://www.slideshare.net/infolit_group/mc-cormack)) demonstrated the important and often undervalued role that special collections professionals play in IL instruction. Tilley and Murphy highlighted the need to give students permission to tell their stories about learning. Through listening to these, they argued, we can build teaching around real examples and encourage more students to communicate through shared experiences.

There were plenty of opportunities to get to know colleagues in a less formal setting. LILAC's welcome event provided a great ice-breaker with a Newcastle-based quiz - we were treated to a brief guide to Geordie culture, history and the lingo. The networking event in the Great North Museum provided a rare chance to explore the museum after dark. The social pinnacle of LILAC was the conference dinner. With champagne flowing, and red carpets rolling, we all descended upon Newcastle Civic Centre in our glad rags. After a delicious meal it was awards time, where fellow student award winner Lucinda May and I felt honoured to be included in the line-up alongside Information Literacy Award winner Katharine Reedy and Credo Reference Digital Award for Information Literacy winners Andy Horton and Chris Rowell. We were then free to dance the night away, but not before the annual book giveaway. Judging from the frenzied stampede of librarians, it's safe to say that we'll never quite escape one particular stereotype.



**Lucinda and Maria with the LILAC Student Award judges**  
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It was a fantastic three days and a high point of my career so far. The open, friendly nature of organisers, speakers, volunteers and delegates alike provided a fertile environment for new ideas and knowledge sharing – it was so inspiring to be around people who take pride in and care deeply about their work. I am so grateful to CILIP's Information Literacy Group Committee for enabling me to attend this fantastic event; I feel confident that this experience has transformed my view of the profession and will be invaluable to my studies and future career.