## Conference corner

# LILAC 2016: reflections

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## 1. Fun, friendly and glamorous too

LILAC 2016, which took place in Dublin from 21-23 March, was three days packed with learning, eating, talking, and playing. Almost everyone I spoke to came away feeling richer for the experience. While LILAC is always commended for its fun and friendly atmosphere, the added journey 'cross the waves added a sense of glamour to the conference too (not including the budget airline flights). University College Dublin were fantastic hosts and the nearby city centre provided the perfect setting for pre-conference culture and post-conference networking. LILAC was preceded by a strong Twitter presence which acted as the perfect tool to prepare for and get excited about the conference. This pre-conference buzz was a great way to become accustomed to making use of the platform (particularly for one who rarely makes use of social media).



**Glamorous event:** Amy O'Donohoe receives her Student Award. Image: ILG

The most prominent theme was engagement in information literacy (IL) and reflection on how we teach this topic. Although Char Booth's keynote address *Why Reflect? The holistic practice of stepping back* was not until the second day, it raised the idea that the whole process of attending was a chance to reflect on what we already know and do, and how we can improve as practitioners. More than a month later I still find myself thinking back to what I learned and considering how I can develop this into stronger practice. LILAC presented many informative and inspirational talks which I have already drawn on to inform new IL sessions and personal development in my own library. The sharing of ideas was a fantastic aspect of the conference with individual sessions allowing for an insight into current transferrable practices in libraries across the world. The sessions, though varied in content and background, worked well together to help create new approaches to IL.

While individual sessions allowed for a closer look at more specific aspects of IL, the keynote speeches acted as the backbone to the conference, setting the themes for the rest of the event. The first keynote, *What can play do for you?*, explosively introduced the ideas of engagement within the first few minutes by creating audience teams and having us compete at games throughout the talk. Through the use of interactive games Nicola Whitton and Alex Moseley presented the benefits of using games for IL, highlighting the aspects of creativity, collaboration,

puzzle-solving, and competition. One of their key points was how making use of pervasive games for learning can increase motivation and engagement and provide a safe space for failing. Nicola and Alex arguably gave the most fun and energetic talk of the conference, perfectly demonstrating how using games can enhance the learning experience for both student and teacher.

## 2. A focus on user engagement

Individual sessions focused on user engagement, and by far the most notable for me was Eileen Wright's *Turning Them Loose: Increasing student engagement through IL activities.* I found her IL tools and sessions innovative and transferable to an audience of any age or skill. My favourite was her use of the film *The Day After Tomorrow* to encourage critical thinking and to introduce students to using the library. Char Booth's discussion of the importance of reflective practice in the library and information science industry was a comical exploration of self-evaluation which made a subject with the potential to be extremely dry both interesting and engaging. Her key point was the need to begin moving from routine action to reflective action to ensure continued development. I came away completely awed and with a new outlook on my own professional development. Antony Groves' *Library Vines: Developing IL six seconds at a time* was given through the medium of Vines (a six second video app). It offered an informative introduction to how Vines have been used for IL purposes at Sussex University and was followed by a tutorial on how to make a Vine with a chance for some hands-on experience. Antony was a wonderful (and patient) teacher and the opportunity to make my own Vine inspired me to make use of the app across the conference.

The active use of social media at the conference offered an unexpected learning experience. I am someone who struggles to participate in social media so the frequent use of Twitter and other social media platforms in sessions, alongside the #LILAC16 and the LILAC game, offered an opportunity to engage in areas that had previously been closed. Arguably the king of Twitter was the final keynote speaker, James Clay. His talk *Building digital capability,* which focused on the need for digital capacity in the work place, was interesting and engaging. But it was his use of Twitter that sticks in my mind. Indeed, while he was discussing his slides his Twitter account was publishing regular updates with further information on his current point. I was not alone in my confusion and awe at his multitasking abilities. It transpired that he was using a timed Twitter feed - something of which I was entirely unaware, and proof of the wisdom of James' words in discussing identifying gaps in knowledge "because people don't know what they don't know, they don't know that they don't know".

As many will already know, LILAC is not just a chance to learn, but also a fantastic opportunity to network. The frequent food and drink breaks gave plenty of chances to mingle, and the open feel of the conference meant that no one had to stand awkwardly alone. The LILAC game was a great icebreaking tool, and the friendly competitiveness that it created definitely added to the jovial atmosphere of each day. The networking evening at the Chester Beatty Library was a fantastic chance to solidify some of the relationships made in the first day and to meet some new people. It was a thoroughly glamorous evening, with the chance to get a glimpse of some of the Chester Beatty collections. The conference dinner lived up to the expectations set by the rest of the conference, with wonderful food, setting, music, and a whole lot of laughter. I am incredibly grateful for the chance to have attended, and I hope in the future to return and present my own work to once again be part of the amazing experience that LILAC offers.