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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> [Accessed: 18 November 2015].

Research-based practice in libraries summit 2016

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Library professional development events in the Arab Gulf are hard to come by. If and when they do happen, the organisers generally give it their all to make it an enriching and interesting experience. I am glad to say this library summit was no exception. The two day event, held on April 3rd and 4th and co-hosted by Carnegie Mellon University Qatar (CMU-Q) and University College London, Qatar (UCL-Q), brought six influential leaders and scholars in library practice to Doha in order to build the capacity of practitioners in the region to integrate evidence-based



research into their practice in order to address challenges unique to their environment. It was attended by over 60 delegates from academic, school, special and public libraries in Qatar and the region. Like myself, most of the attendees were new or early career practitioners. As a research associate at the CMU-Q Library and being rather new to the role, I took advantage of this rare occasion to enhance my skills and network with professionals from the region.

Dr Abdellahi Hussein gave the opening welcome session on behalf of Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), the event's sponsor. In it, he emphasized QNRF's mission to make funding available to further research and community activities within Qatar and the region. The availability of money to support research and development is definitely an encouraging factor for people like me, considering the global economic state of affairs and the position of educational training and development in the totem pole of institutional priorities.



Alison Brettle (University of Salford) presented an introduction to research and evaluation, which served as a great “getting started” guide and highlighted the differences between the two. She also gave a workshop on conducting systematic reviews in Library and Information Studies (LIS) – a rather daunting prospect to even the experts. She spoke about the various lessons she learned as a researcher, enumerating them with examples and giving us a clear to-do list of activities while engaging in the systematic review process.

Helen Partridge (University of Southern Queensland) delivered two workshops, both of which I found truly educational. First, her presentation on adopting a practitioner-researcher approach to library practice was an essential reminder that, as practitioners, we are also, by default, researchers – it was an enlightening thought to some of us who were new to this concept. Second, she presented on effective grant-writing, sharing strategies for crafting succinct and well-constructed grant requests with a panache that made us all want to make a go of it.

Colleagues from school libraries who attended Ross Todd's (Rutgers University) presentation came away inspired by the exhilarating session. He highlighted the critical importance of evidence-based research practice in school libraries while exploring a range of strategies that school librarians can undertake to document their library initiatives and use the evidence to tell their stories in compelling ways.

Lili Luo (San Jose State University) presented on qualitative and quantitative research methods, with an emphasis on making the right methodological decision regarding a given research question. She gave us an introduction to research methods such as focus groups, in-depth interviews, surveys and content analysis. She also spoke at length about research ethics which brought about some lively discussions in the group on the finer points, for example on the ambiguity of consent in an observational study.

Emma Coonan (*Journal of Information Literacy (JIL)*) took us through the intricacies of getting work published, and provided tips on how to avoid being disheartened with a process that can at times seem unsurmountable. Walking us through the peer-review process, Emma gave us insight into what journal reviewers are looking for, and how at *JIL*, they emphasise constructive feedback to authors. One point that stayed with me was her advice about choosing the right “container”, or publication outlet, for your work; that being rejected by one publication is no reason to conclude that your work is useless. It likely just needs the right container to fit into. This encouragement was inspirational, leading to this review.

Barbara Wildemuth (University of North Carolina) presented a workshop entitled *Application of Social Research Methods in Library & Information Science*. A colleague who attended reported that “it was perhaps the most useful workshop of the whole summit in terms of making applied research seem achievable for us.” The session broke down real examples of practice-based research into their methods and resources used and also inspired a number of possible questions for applied research.



A well-sequenced programme ensured that a clear thread of connectedness ran through all the sessions leaving us with a feeling of staying in calm waters rather than being tossed from one topic to another and ending up with the sort of overwhelming confusion that I personally have encountered from past events. Keeping concurrent sessions to one per day also ensured a sense of not missing out on too much. My colleagues and I are unanimous in our hope that such value-added events are offered more frequently to help professionals in this region keep updated about, and enthusiastic for, their fields.

Alanna Ross (American University of Sharjah) summed up in her feedback for most of us who attended the summit. She said: "... hearing from international experts and meeting with our regional colleagues provided great opportunity to think about areas of existing library service or practice, where application of evidence-based research projects can inform improved service delivery and change within our own contexts. Workshops presented processes and introduced practical strategies that can be applied or scaled to any setting. I, for one, left inspired to investigate potential projects at my own institution as both practitioner and researcher working on the ground." And that is the truth – we left better informed and invigorated to explore and apply our newly acquired research expertise.

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