

Conference report

LILAC 2025: Takeaways for my teaching and learning, and research practice

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As someone who has attended the LILAC conference a number of times, I always find the experience to be inspiring and I come away with a range of new ideas to implement in my own practice and workplace. This year's conference at Cardiff University (14th–16th April 2025) was no different, and this conference report will cover some of this year's highlights for me.

I have previously attended LILAC conferences as an academic librarian, however this year was the first attending in my new role as an educational developer, a staff-facing role supporting staff who teach to improve their teaching and learning practice. This influenced my choice of sessions that I attended when selecting sessions from the perspective of taking learning back to my role and team, and I am also looking to start a PhD and selected some talks specifically for their potential relevance to the topic I am interested in researching.

In my opinion LILAC can often be associated with librarians and I was pleased to see that all of this year's keynote speakers were non-librarians as I think this helps to encourage the view that information literacy (IL) is not just relevant to and the remit of librarians. When starting my new role I was worried that my new team may not see the relevance of this conference within my team, but I am very fortunate that this was not the case and my line manager sees very strong links and overlap between our team and the library based Learning Development team in my institution, asking me to take on the remit for liaising between the two teams. Seeing an educational developer in a similar team to mine, Jane Secker (2025), as one of the keynotes also helps me to get the message across to my wider team that IL is relevant to us, and Jane made a key point in her keynote about the language and terms used when talking about literacies and the fact that people often use media and digital literacy and see those as relevant to them, but not always IL, despite this being an umbrella term for some of these other literacies. Jane also highlighted the need to make wider links beyond libraries with those who have the power around topics of media and digital literacy, and it caused me to reflect on the

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terms used at my new institution and who the key links could be for me to make within these areas. I think Jane's keynote was well placed this year as one of the founders of the conference on its 20-year anniversary and the entertainment value throughout was fantastic.

Another of this year's keynote speakers is an academic from the host institution, Stephen Thornton, who talked about his work on making IL more explicit within his subject area of politics (Thornton, 2025). Stephen raised his critical approach to the sometimes strong and emotive language that people use around IL, such as the claim that it can empower people, and questioned whether this and the citizenship element of IL beyond academic courses resonates with academics or whether they are more likely to engage with IL within the context of their classroom. I think it is great to see an academic engaging with IL research, however I would question whether citation analysis research dilutes the scope of IL to simply the use of source types when in reality it is much broader than this. A point Stephen raised which I feel is very relevant to me in my educational development role was that he struggles to get this type of IL research published in UK discipline specific journals and instead relies on pedagogic journals, and I reflected on how this could potentially be putting other academics off from doing similar scholarship of learning and teaching work if they are prioritising research that is more likely to be publishable in discipline specific journals, and what my team could do to encourage the equal prestige and priority of publishing in pedagogic journals. An attendee asked a question of Stephen around the hierarchies involved with academics and professional services staff working together, and unfortunately I felt that the response perpetuated these hierarchical views in that it referred to academics being interested if they see the librarian as 'helping' and encouraged librarians to 'be visible'. So even an academic doing a lot of explicit work around IL still holds views that perpetuate a power dynamic between the academic and the librarian 'helper', and attributing a poor working relationship to the perceived lack of visibility of the librarian.

Two presentations I specifically attended for potential relevance to my research interests were *The role of emotion in access to information on reproductive health, illness and disability: implications for IL instruction* (Kapacinskas et al., 2025), and *I can show you the (life) world; qualitative techniques to examine women's information experiences* (Woods, 2025). The first of these had very strong relevance to the topic of help seeking which I am looking to focus on with my potential PhD research. The session covered the role that emotions can play when motivating people to seek information or hinder them from doing so and questioned whether current information behaviour models recognise this fully. This could have implications for students' academic study as their emotions about a particular assignment topic could impact their information and help seeking behaviour when engaging with it. Another way the session highlighted that emotions could impact students when seeking information are the emotions they could feel when information isn't available, and how in turn that could impact their help seeking for the information they need and the emotions they could demonstrate with us when seeking that help. Their work is underpinned by Savolainen's (2016) work on appraisal theory for information seeking which introduces a conceptual framework based on the idea that a person evaluates their circumstances which results in certain emotions, and these emotions can then impact their information seeking. I chose to attend the second of these presentations as most of my research activity tends to be qualitative and I wanted to learn more about the presenter's methodology of information diaries. It gave me some really great ideas of how I could use a similar methodology in my own research and tips for how to ensure this works successfully as an innovative methodology. This session also highlighted to me some considerations I already had about potential sources that students could go to for information and help seeking and really stressed the importance of human information sources. It

demonstrated that human information sources are not only chosen based on knowledge, but approachability and the relationship the information seeker already has with them. It also covered AI tools as a source for information and help seeking, particularly as a study or conversation partner replacing a human in this role. I think this has really important implications in my work for understanding who students may seek help and information from. This also resonated with a comment Stephen Thornton (2025) made in his keynote about some research with taught PGT students which found they 'emulated' the advice of professors around IL recommendations such as places to search.

A third session that I reflected on in terms of relevance for potential research into help seeking behaviour was Darren Flynn's session on *The information hinterland of academic librarians*. Darren's session demonstrated that people's backgrounds could impact how they approach IL and see information landscapes, and this made me consider how someone's background could also potentially impact their help seeking behaviour. I may also need to take individual's socio-cultural backgrounds into consideration as well as their current contexts within my own research. Similar to Kapacinskaskas et al. (2025), Darren also asked attendees to reflect on whether current IL definitions and frameworks account for the potential impact of someone's socio-cultural background.

I did also present myself this year on the topic of punk pedagogy, a critical pedagogy underpinned by principles of DIY, student ownership, teacher/learner reciprocity, and questioning and critiquing hegemonic systems (Coles, 2014; Torrez, 2012), and I am very grateful for the opportunity to do so. Particularly as it generated a lot of interest and discussion from attendees and allowed me to make a number of connections with others for future collaboration. I often attend LILAC presentations and feel that the work being presented by others would fit under the principles of punk pedagogy, so I bookended my presentation with a poll asking attendees to rate how 'punk' they think they are at the start then at the end after listening to my explanation of the theory and examples of this within my own IL practice. Unsurprisingly to me the room average increased from 2.9 to 4.2 and at the end I put out a call for potential contributors to an edited collection on punk pedagogy and have already had attendees of my presentation reaching out to get involved.

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Declarations

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